



THE
WILD SWANS
AND OTHER STORIES

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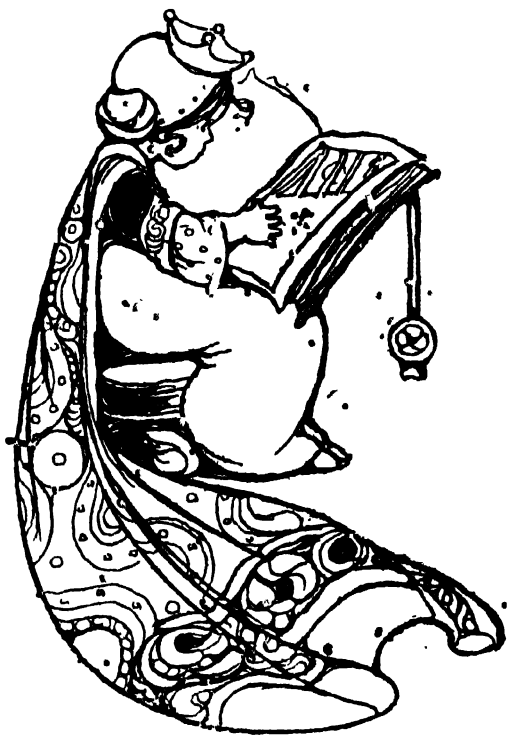
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THE WILD SWANS.

FAR away hence, in the land whither the swans fly when it is cold winter with us, there once lived a King who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Elisa. The eleven brothers were Princes, and used to go to school with a star on their breast, and a sword at their side. They wrote on gold

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slates with diamond pencils, and learned by heart as easily as they could read; one could immediately perceive they were Princes. Their sister Elisa sat on a little glass stool, and had a book full of prints, that had cost nearly half the kingdom to purchase.

O, these children were happy, indeed—but, unfortunately, their happiness was not to last.

Their father, who was the King of the land, married a wicked Queen, who was not well disposed towards the poor children. This they perceived from the very first day. There were festivities in the palace, and the children were playing at receiving visitors; but instead of their obtaining, as usual, all the cakes and roast apples that were to be had, she merely gave them some sand in a tea-cup, and told them they could make-believe with that.

In the following week, she sent their little sister Elisa to a peasant's cottage in the country; and before long, she spoke so ill of the poor Princes to the King that he no longer troubled himself about them.

"Fly out into the world, and pick up your own livelihood," said the wicked Queen. "Fly in the shape of large birds without a voice." But she could not make things as bad as she wished, for they were turned into eleven beautiful wild swans; and away they flew out of the palace windows, uttering a peculiar cry, as they swept over the park to the forest beyond.

It was still early, as they passed by the peasant's cottage, where Elisa lay asleep. They hovered over the roof, and extended their long necks, and flapped their wings, but nobody heard or saw them; so they were obliged to go on. And they rose up to the clouds, and flew out into the wide world, until

they reached a large, gloomy forest, that shelved down to the sea-shore.

Poor little Elisa was standing in a room in the cottage, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other toy. And she perceived a hole through the leaf, and looked up at the sun, when she fancied she saw her brothers' clear eyes; and every time the warm sunbeams fell on her cheeks, she used to think of their kisses.

One day was just as monotonous as another. If the wind rustled through the large hedge of rose-bushes, he would whisper to the roses: "Who can be more beautiful than you?" But the roses would shake their heads, and answer: "Elisa." And if the old woman sat before the door, on a Sunday, reading her psalm-book, the wind would turn over the leaves and say to the book: "Who can be more pious than thou?" And then the psalm-book would answer: "Elisa." And both the roses and the psalm-book spoke the truth.

When she was fifteen, she was to return home. But when the Queen saw how beautiful she was, her heart was filled with hatred and spite. She would willingly have turned her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she dared not do it just yet, because the King wished to see his daughter. Early in the morning, the Queen went into the bath-room, which was built of marble, and furnished with soft cushions, and the most beautiful carpet, and hangings imaginable, and she took three foals and kissed them, and said to one of them:

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"Sit upon Elisa's head when she comes into the bath, that she may become stupid, like yourself. Sit upon her forehead," she said to another, "that she may grow as ugly as you, and that her father may not recognise her. Rest on her heart," whispered she to the third, "that she may have a bad disposition which will breed her pain." She then put the toads into the transparent water, which turned green, and next called Elisa, and helped her to undress and get into the bath. And as Elisa dipped her head under the water, one toad placed itself on her hair, another on her forehead, and a third on her breast. But she did not appear to observe them; and as soon as she rose up again, three poppies were floating on the water. If the animals had not been venomous, and had not been kissed by the witch, they would have been changed into red roses. But flowers they became, however, because they had rested on her head and her heart. She was too pious and too innocent for any witchcraft to have power over her.

When the wicked Queen perceived this, she rubbed the Princess with walnut-juice till she was quite brown, and besmeared her face with rancid ointment, and tangled her magnificent hair, till it was impossible to recognise the beautiful Elisa.

When her father saw her he was quite frightened, and declared she was not his daughter. Nobody but the watch-dog and the swallows could recognise her—only they were poor animals, and could not speak a word.

Poor Elisa then cried, and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all away. And she stole out of the palace in great affliction, and walked the whole day long across fields and marshes, till she reached the large forest. She knew not whither she was going, but she felt so sad, and she longed to see her brothers, whom she felt certain had been driven out into the world like herself, and she determined to seek till she found them.

She had been but a short time in the wood when night came on; and having walked a long way, she lay down on the soft moss, said her prayers, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. It was perfectly quiet all around, the air was mild, and hundreds of glow-worms lit up the surrounding grass and moss like green fire; and if she touched a twig ever so lightly, the brilliant insects showered down like so many falling stars.

All night she dreamed of her brothers. She thought they were playing together as in childhood, and were writing with the diamond pencils on the gold slates, and looking at the prints in the book that had cost half the kingdom. Only, instead of making sums on the slates, as heretofore, they wrote down the valiant deeds they had achieved, and all that they had done and seen; and in the print-book everything was living—the birds were singing, and the figures were walking out of the book, and speaking to Elisa and her brothers. But the moment the latter turned over the leaves,

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they jumped back into their places, that no disorder might ensue.

The sun was already high in the heavens when she awoke. Not that she could see the sun, for the lofty trees were arching overhead, but its beams were playing here and there, like the fluttering of a gold gauze scarf; and there came a sweet fragrance from the woods, and the birds almost perched on her shoulders. She heard the rippling of water, which proceeded from several large

streams that fell into a lake that had a most beautiful sandy bed. Thick bushes grew round the lake, but the deer had made a large opening at one spot, through which Elisa was enabled to reach the water. Its surface was so clear, that when the wind did not ruffle the branches and bushes, one might have fancied they had been painted at the bottom of the lake, so plainly was every leaf reflected, whether it stood in the sunshine or the shade.

As soon as Elisa saw her own image, she was frightened at finding herself so brown and so ugly. But on wetting her little hand, and rubbing her eyes and forehead, her white skin was soon apparent once more. She then undressed, and got into the water; and a lovelier royal child than herself could not have been met with in the wide world. When she had dressed herself again, and braided her long hair, she went to the running stream, and drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then she wandered deeper into the forest, without knowing what she meant to do. She thought of her brothers, and trusted that God would not abandon her. God has bidden the wild apples grow to feed the hungry, and He led her to one of these trees, whose boughs were bending beneath the weight of their fruit. Here she made her mid-day meal, and after propping up the branches she went into the gloomiest depths of the forest. It was so quiet there, that she could hear the sound of her own footsteps, and every little dried leaf that

crackled under her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, nor did a sunbeam penetrate through the large dark branches. The lofty trunks stood so close to each other, that when she looked before her it seemed as if she were shut in by a lattice made of huge beams of wood. It was solitude such as she had never known before.

The night was quite dark. Not a little glow-worm beamed from the moss. She lay down sorrowfully to compose herself to sleep. She then fancied that the boughs above her head moved aside, and that the Almighty looked down upon her with pitying eyes, while little angels hovered above His head and under His arms.

Next morning when she awoke, she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether it had really taken place. She then set out, but had not gone many steps when she met an old woman, with a basket full of berries. The old woman gave her some to eat, and Elisa asked her if she had not seen eleven princes riding through the forest. "No," said the old woman; "but yesterday I saw eleven swans with gold crowns on their heads, swimming down the river herabouts."

She then led Elisa a little further, towards a slope, at the foot of which ran a winding rivulet. The trees on its banks stretched forth their long, leafy branches till they met, and wherever their growth would not have allowed them to mingle their foliage, the roots had broken loose from the soil,

and hung entwined with the branches across the water.

Elisa then bid the old dame farewell, and followed the rivulet till it flowed towards a wide, open shore.

• The sea now lay before the young maiden, in all its splendour, but not a sail was to be seen, and not so much as a boat could be descried. How was she to proceed further? She looked at the countless little pebbles on the shore, which the water had worn till they were quite smooth—glass, iron, stones, everything, in short, that lay there and had been washed by the waves, had assumed the shape from the water, though it was softer still than her delicate hand. “It rolls along indefatigably, and wears away the hardest substances—I will be equally indefatigable. Thanks for the lesson you gave me, ye clear, rolling waves! My heart tells me you will bear me to my dear brothers!”

In the moist sea-weeds lay eleven white swans' feathers, which she gathered into a bunch. Drops of water trembled upon them; but whether they were dew-drops or tears, nobody could tell. It was lonely on that seashore, but she did not feel it to be so, for the sea was ever changing, and displayed more variety in a few hours than the sweetest landscapes could show in a whole year. If a heavy, black cloud arose, it seemed as if the sea meant to say: “I, too, know how to look dark;” and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outwards. But if the clouds were rosy, then the winds slept, and the sea looked



like a rose-leaf—now white, now green. Yet, however calm it might be, there was always a slight motion near the shore, and the waters would heave slightly, like the breast of a slumbering infant.

Just at sunset, Elisa saw eleven wild swans, with gold crowns on their heads, flying towards the shore, one behind the other, like a long white ribbon. Elisa then went up the slope, and hid herself behind a bush; the swans came down quite close to her, and flapped their large white wings.

The sun had no sooner sunk into the water, than their swans' plumage fell off, and Elisa's brothers stood there as eleven handsome princes. She uttered a loud scream; for, changed as they were, she knew and felt it must be they. She flung herself into their arms, calling them by their names; and the Princes were quite happy on recognising their little sister, and finding how beautiful she had grown. They laughed and cried all in a breath, and they had soon related to each other how wicked their stepmother had been to them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly about, as wild swans, as long as the sun stands in the heavens; but no sooner has it sunk down than we recover our human shape. Therefore must we always provide a resting-place for our feet towards sunset; for were we flying in the clouds at this hour, we should fall into the sea, on resuming our natural form. We do not live here. There lies across the sea a country as beautiful as this; but the way thither is long. We have to cross the

wide sea, and there is not an island to be met with on the passage; only one solitary little rock lifts its head from the midst of the waters, and is barely large enough to afford us a resting-place by crowding closely together. If the sea is rough, the waves dash over us; still, we thank God even for this barren crag, where we spend the night in our human shape, for without it we should never be able to visit our beloved country, since it requires two of the longest days in the year for our flight. It is only once a year that we have the privilege of visiting our home, and we have but eleven days to remain here and to fly over the forest, whence we can look upon the palace where we were born, and where our father lives, and at the church where our mother lies buried. We feel here as if the very trees and bushes were related to us; we see the wild horses careering over the steppes as we saw them in childhood; we hear the charcoal-burners singing the old songs to which we danced as children; it is, in short, the land of our birth, and hither do we feel ourselves irresistibly attracted; and here we have found you, our dear little sister. But we have only two days left to remain here, and then we must cross the sea to go to a beautiful country, which, however, is not our own. How shall we take you with us, when we have neither ship nor boat?"

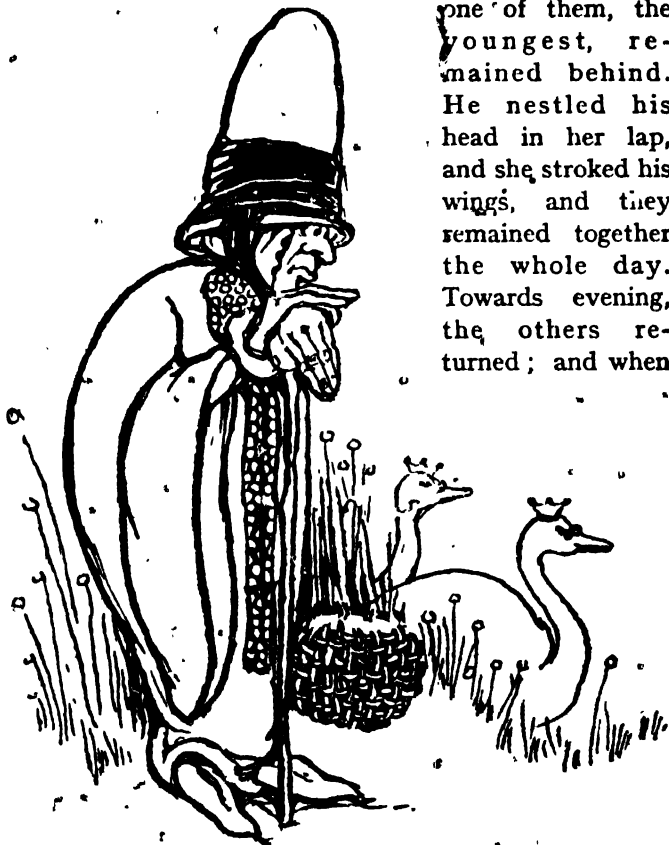
"How can I break your spell?" asked the sister.

And they talked nearly the whole night through, and only slept a very few hours.

Elisa awoke on hearing the rustling of the swans' wings as they hovered over her, for her brothers were once more transformed. They described large circles, and at length flew quite away; but

one of them, the youngest, remained behind.

He nestled his head in her lap, and she stroked his wings, and they remained together the whole day. Towards evening, the others returned; and when



the sun had set, they resumed their natural shapes.

"To-morrow we must fly away," said one of them, "and may not return till the expiration of a whole year. Yet we cannot leave you thus. Have you the courage to accompany us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the forest, and why should not the wings of us all suffice to bear you across the ocean?"

"Yes, do take me with you," said Elisa.

They spent the whole night in making a net with the pliant bark of osiers and ropy sedges; and the net proved large and strong. Elisa lay down upon it, and when the sun rose, and her brothers were changed to swans, they took up the net with their beaks, and flew up to the clouds with their beloved sister, who was still fast asleep. As the sunbeams fell right upon her countenance, one of the swans hovered over her head to shade her with his broad wings.

They were far from land when Elisa awoke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it seem to her to be carried up in the air over the wide sea. By her side lay a branch full of delicious ripe berries, and a bundle of savoury roots; these had been gathered by her youngest brother, and placed ready for her use. She smiled her thanks to him, for she recognised him in the swan who was hovering over her to shade her with his wings.

They were so high up in the air, that the

largest ship below them looked like a white sea-mew riding on the waves. A great cloud stood behind them like a vast mountain, and on this Elisa saw depicted her own shadow and that of the eleven swans, in giant proportions. This was a prettier picture than she had ever yet seen. But when the sun rose higher, and the cloud remained further behind them, the floating vision vanished from her sight.

They flew on and on the livelong day, like an arrow hurtling through the air; still, they proceeded somewhat more slowly than usual, having their sister to carry. Dark clouds arose as evening came on, and Elisa beheld the sinking sun with an anxious heart, for as yet no rock was in sight. It seemed to her as if the swans were flapping their wings with desperate efforts. Alas! she was the cause they could not advance faster. And at sunset they must recover their human shape, and fall into the sea and get drowned! Oh! how she prayed for their safety, from her inmost heart!—but still no rock appeared. The black cloud approached; violent gusts of wind told of a coming storm, while the clouds, gathered into one massive threatening wave, seemed to move forward like lead. One flash of lightning followed upon another.

The sun had now reached the edge of the sea. Elisa's heart beat fast, and the swans darted down so swiftly, that she thought they must fall. But now, again, they soared in the air. The sun had

dipped half into the water, when at length the little rock appeared below them. It did not look larger than a sea-dog's head, peeping out of the waves. The sun sank so rapidly, that it now only looked like a star—and, at that moment, their feet touched the solid ground. The sun went out like the last spark in a piece of burnt paper, and the brothers now stood arm-in-arm around their sister; but there was not an inch more room than just sufficient for herself and them.

The waves lashed the rock, and a drizzling mist kept falling over them, while the sky was lighted up with continual flashes, and one clap of thunder followed close upon another; but the sister and her brothers sat holding each other's hands, and singing psalms, from which they derived both hope and courage.

Towards dawn the air was pure and still; and the moment the sun had risen, the swans carried Elisa away from the rock.

The sea was still rough, and, when seen from above, the white foam that crested the dark green waves, looked like millions of swans swimming on the waters.

When the sun had risen higher, Elisa saw before her, in the air, a mountain, with masses of glittering ice upon its crags, from the midst of which rose a castle at least a mile long, with colonnade upon colonnade piled boldly each on the top of the other. Forests of palm trees were waving below, together with flowers as large as mill-wheels.



"IN THE MOIST SEAWeed LAY ELEVEN WHITE SWANS'
FEATHERS."

She inquired if that was the land whither they were bound? But the swans shook their heads, for what she saw was nothing but the fairy Morgiana's beautiful and ever-varying castle, built of clouds, and which no mortal could enter. Elisa was still gazing at it, when down fell mountains, forests, and castle in one vast heap, and twenty stately churches, all alike, with high steeples and gothic windows, rose upon their ruins.

She thought she heard the organ pealing, but it was the roaring of the sea that deceived her.

As she approached the churches, these, in turn, changed to a large fleet, that seemed to be sailing under her. On looking below, however, she discovered it to be mere clouds of mist, that were gliding across the waters. She thus kept viewing an endless succession of sights, till at length she perceived the real land whither they were going, where stood the finest blue mountains, with cedar forests, towers, and castles. Long before sunset, she sat on a rock, in front of a large cavern, that was overgrown with delicate green creepers, looking like an embroidered carpet.

"Now we shall see what you will dream about to-night," said the youngest brother, as he showed his sister her chamber.

"Heaven send that I may dream how to save you!" said she; and this notion busied her intently, and she prayed heartily to God to help her—so heartily, indeed, that she continued praying in her sleep. She then thought she was flying.

through the air, to the fairy Morgiana's castle of clouds; and the fairy came forth to welcome her, in all her beauty and splendour, yet resembling, withal, the old woman who had given her the berries in the forest, and told her of the swans with gold crowns on their heads.

"Your brothers can be delivered," said she, "but have you sufficient courage and constancy to break the spell? Water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it wears away stones; but it does not feel the pains your fingers will have to feel; and, having no heart, it cannot suffer the cares and anxiety that you will have to endure. Do you see this stinging-nettle that I hold in my hand? A number of the same sort grow round the cavern in which you are sleeping; and, mark me well, only those, and such as grow in churchyards, are available for the purpose in question. You must pluck them, although they will blister your hands. By treading upon them with your feet, you will obtain flax, with which you must braid eleven coats of mail with long sleeves, that will no sooner be thrown over the eleven swans than the spell will be broken. But remember that from the moment you begin this work, until it be finished, though it should take years to accomplish, you must not speak a word, or the first syllable you pronounce would strike a death dagger through your brothers' hearts. Their lives depend on your silence. Mark this well."

And at the same time she touched her hand with the nettle, which was like burning fire and caused Elisa to wake. It was broad day, and close beside her lay a nettle, like those she had seen in her dream. She then fell on her knees, and thanked God, and left the cave, to begin her work.

Her delicate hands now plucked the ugly nettles that were like fire. Large blisters rose on her hands and arms; yet she suffered cheerfully, in the hopes of delivering her beloved brothers. She trod each nettle with her bare feet, and then began to braid the green flax.

When the sun had sunk, her brothers came home, and were frightened to find her dumb. They thought it some fresh spell contrived by their wicked stepmother. But on seeing her hands, they understood what she was doing for their sakes; and the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears fell on her hands, the burning blisters disappeared. She worked all night, for she could not rest till she had delivered her dear brothers. The swans were absent during the whole of the following day, and she sat alone; but never had the hours seemed to fly faster. One coat of mail was already finished, and she then began another. A bugle-horn now echoed amongst the mountains, and made her start with fear. The sound approached—she heard the barking of dogs, and she hastened back into the cave in alarm, and tying up the nettles that she had gathered and dressed into a bundle, she sat upon it.

At that moment, a large dog jumped out from a narrow pass between the mountains, and was quickly followed by another, and another still; they barked loudly, and ran back, and then returned again. In a few minutes, all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest amongst them was the King of the land. He stepped up to Elisa, who was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

"How did you come hither, lovely maiden?" asked he. Elisa shook her head. She dared not speak, for her brothers' delivery and lives were at stake; and she hid her hands under her apron, that the King might not see what she was enduring. "Come with me," said he. "You cannot remain here. If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in silk and velvet, and place my gold crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest palace." He then lifted her on to his horse. She wept, and wrung her hands, but the King said: "I do but wish for your happiness. Some day you will thank me for what I am doing."

And then he hunted through the mountains, and held her before him on his horse, and the huntsmen hunted behind them.

Towards sunset, the handsome capital, with its churches and cupolas lay before them. And the King led her into the palace, where large fountains were playing in marble halls whose walls and ceilings were adorned with paintings. But she had not the heart to look at these fine things, and kept



weeping and mourning. However, she willingly allowed the women to dress her in regal robes, to braid her hair with pearls, and to put delicate gloves over her scorched fingers.

When she appeared in all her magnificence she looked so dazzlingly beautiful, that the whole court bowed still more profoundly before her. And the King chose her for his bride, though the archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the pretty maid of the forest was in all likelihood a witch, who had fascinated the eyes and befooled the heart of their King.

But the King would not listen to him, and ordered the music to strike up, and the most costly

dishes to be laid on the table, whilst the loveliest girls danced round her. And she was led through the fragrant garden, to most magnificent rooms, but not a smile could be won from her lips, or made to sparkle in her eyes. She seemed the image of sorrow. The King then opened a little room, close to her sleeping chamber, that was provided with a costly green carpet, and was exactly like the cave she came from. On the floor lay the bundle of flax that she had spun out of the nettles, while the coat of mail, which she had finished, hung from the ceiling. All these things had been taken away by a huntsman, who looked upon them as curiosities.

"You can fancy yourself in your early home," said the King. "Here is your work, which busied you in the cave; and now, in the midst of all your magnificence, it may amuse you to look back at those days."

When Elisa saw that which interested her so deeply, a smile played round her mouth, and the blood rushed back to her cheeks. She thought of her brothers' delivery, and kissed the King's hand, while he pressed her to his heart, and ordered all the bells to ring to announce their marriage. And the beautiful, dumb maid of the forest became the Queen of the land. The archbishop whispered slanderous words into the King's ears, but they could not reach his heart. The wedding, he was determined, should take place, and the archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on the new Queen's head, though he maliciously pressed down

its narrow circlet on her forehead, so that it hurt her. But a heavier circlet bound her heart, and that was her sorrow for her brothers' fate. She did not heed her bodily sufferings. She remained mute, for a single word would have cost her brothers their lives; but her eyes expressed deep love for the kind, handsome King, who did everything to please her. Each day she loved him more and more. Oh! how it would have relieved her to have told him her sorrows, and to be able to complain! But dumb she must remain, and in silence must she finish her work. She, therefore, used to steal away from his side at night, and go into the little room that was decorated like the cave, and plaited one coat of mail after another.

On beginning the seventh, however, there was no flax left.

She knew that the nettles she required grew in the churchyard; only she must pluck them herself, and she knew not how she could manage to reach the spot.

"Oh! what is the pain in my fingers, compared to the anxiety my heart endures?" thought she "I must attempt the adventure! The Lord will not withdraw His hand from me." And with as much fear and trembling as if she were about to commit a wicked action, did she steal down into the garden one moonlight night, and crossing the long alleys, she threaded the lonely streets until she reached the churchyard. There she saw a circle of phantoms sitting on one of the broadest graves

stones. These ugly witches took off their rags as if they were going to bathe, and then they dug up the fresh graves with their long, skinny fingers, took out the dead bodies, and devoured their flesh. Elisa was obliged to pass by them, and they scowled upon her; but she prayed silently, and plucked the burning nettles, and carried them home.

One human being alone had seen her, and that was the archbishop. He was up while others were sleeping. Now he felt confirmed in his opinion that the Queen was not what she ought to be and that she was a witch, who had befooled the King and the whole nation by her arts.

He told the King, in the confessional, what he had seen and what he had feared. And when harsh words came out of his mouth, the carved images of saints shook their heads, as much as to say: "It is not true! Elisa is innocent." But the archbishop interpreted their protestations quite differently: he pretended they bore witness against her, and that they shook their heads at her sins. Then a couple of bitter tears rolled down the King's cheeks. He went home with a misgiving heart, and that night he pretended to go to sleep. But no sleep visited his eyes, and he perceived that Elisa got up. Every night she did the same, and each time he followed her softly, and saw her disappear into the little room.

His brow grew darker day by day. Elisa saw



"ELISA AND HER YOUNGEST BROTHER."

the change that had come over him, yet could not imagine the reason, though it made her uneasy—and, besides this, how she suffered at heart on her brothers' account. Her warm tears bedewed the regal velvet and purple, and there they lay like glittering diamonds, and all who saw their splendour wished to be a Queen. Meantime, she had nearly finished her work. Only one coat of mail was wanting; but she was short of flax, and had not a single nettle left. Once more—and this once only—would she have to go to the churchyard and gather a few handfuls of nettles. She thought with horror of this lonely excursion, and of the frightful phantoms, but her will was as firm as her trust in the Lord.

Elisa went, but the King and the archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear behind the grated door of the churchyard, and when they had nearly come up with her, the witches were sitting on the gravestone, as Elisa had seen them, and the King turned away, for he fancied that she, whose head had been pillowed on his breast that very evening, was making one amongst those loathsome creatures.

"The people must judge her," said he. And the people pronounced that she was to be burned as a witch.

She was now taken from the splendour of the royal palace to a dark, damp dungeon, where the wind whistled through a grating; and instead of silk and velvet they gave her the bunch of nettles

which she had gathered—this was to serve as her pillow, while the hard, burning coats of mail that she had plaited, were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been more welcome to her—she resumed her work, and prayed to heaven. The boys in the street sang lampoons upon her outside her prison, and not a soul comforted her with kind words.

Towards evening, the rustling of a swan's wings sounded near the grating. This was her youngest brother, who had discovered his sister's dungeon; and she sobbed her joy at seeing him, although she knew that the following night would, in all probability be her last. But now her work was almost completed, and her brothers were there.

The archbishop came to spend the last hour with her, as he had promised the King he would do so. But she shook her head, and begged him by looks and by signs to go away. For, unless she completed her work that night, her sufferings, her tears, and her sleepless nights would all prove vain. The archbishop left the prison, muttering calumnies against her, but poor Elisa knew that she was innocent, and therefore she proceeded with her work.

The little mice ran about on the floor; they dragged the nettles to her feet, in order to help as well as they could; while a thrush sat near the grating of a window, and sang most sweetly all night long, to keep up her spirits.

At early dawn, about an hour before sunrise, the

eleven brothers presented themselves at the palace gate and requested to be shown in to the King. But they were told it was impossible. It was still night, and the King was asleep, and could not be awoken. They implored, they threatened, the guard appeared, and at last the King himself came out to inquire what was the matter—but just then the sun arose, and no more Princes were to be seen, and nothing but eleven swans flew over the palace.

The whole population flowed out through the gates of the town to see the witch burnt. An old, sorry-looking hack drew the cart on which she sat; she was dressed in a sackcloth kirtle, and her beautiful hair was hanging loose on her shoulders; her cheeks were as pale as death, and her lips moved slightly, while her fingers continued braiding the green hair. Even on her way to death, she would not interrupt the work she had undertaken; the ten coats of mail lay at her feet, and she was finishing the eleventh. The people scoffed at her.

“Look how the witch is muttering! She has no psalm-book in her hand—no! she is busy with her hateful juggling—let’s tear her work to pieces.”

And they all rushed forward, and were going to tear the coats of mail, when the eleven swans darted down, and placing themselves around her in the cart, flapped their large wings. The crowd now gave way in alarm.

“Tis a sign from Heaven! She is surely innocent!” whispered the multitude; but they did not dare to say so aloud.



The executioner now took hold of her, but she hastily threw the eleven coats of mail over the swans, when eleven handsome Princes instantly stood before her. Only the youngest had a swan's

wing instead of an arm, because a sleeve was wanting to complete his coat of mail, for she had not been able to finish it.

"Now, I may speak!" said she. "I am innocent!"

And the mob, on seeing what had taken place, now bowed before her, as if she had been a saint; but she sank fainting into her brothers' arms, exhausted by the intense anxiety and grief she had suffered.

"Yes, she is innocent!" said the eldest brother, and he now related all that had happened. And as he spoke, the air was filled with perfume as of millions of roses—for every stick of firewood in the funeral pile had taken root and put forth twigs, and there stood a fragrant hedge, both tall and thick, full of red roses; and quite above bloomed a flower as white and brilliant as a star. The King plucked it, and placed it in Elisa's bosom, and she awoke, with a peaceful and happy heart.

And all the bells fell a-ringing of themselves, and birds flocked thither in long processions. And such a wedding party as returned to the palace, no King had ever seen before.



THE STORKS.

ON the last house in a little village there lay a stork's nest. The mother stork sat in the nest, beside her four little ones, who were stretching forth their heads with their little black bills, that had not yet turned red. At a short distance, on the top of the roof, stood the father stork, as stiff and bolt upright as well could be. He had drawn up one leg under him, in order not to remain quite idle while he stood sentry. One might have taken him to be carved out of wood, so motionless was he. "It, no doubt, looks very grand for my wife to have a sentinel by her nest!" thought he. "They can't know that I am her husband, and they will, of course, conclude that I have been commanded to stand here. It looks so noble!" And he continued standing on one leg.

A whole swarm of children were playing in the street below; and when they perceived the stork, the

forwardest of the boys sang the old song about the stork, in which the others soon joined. Only each sang it just as he happened to recollect it:—

"Stork, stork—fly home and rest,
Nor on one leg thus sentry keep!
Your wife is sitting in her nest,
To lull her little ones to sleep.
There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another;
For a third there's a gun
And a spit for his brother!"

"Only listen to what the boys are singing!" said the young storks. "They say we shall be hanged and burned."

"You shouldn't mind what they say," said the mother stork; "if you don't listen it won't hurt you."

But the boys went on singing, and pointing at the stork with their fingers. Only one boy, whose name was Peter, said it was a shame to make game of animals, and would not join the rest. The mother stork comforted her young ones. "Don't trouble your heads about it," said she, "only see how quiet your father stands, and that on one leg!" "We are frightened!" said the young ones, drawing back their heads into the nest.

Next day, when the children had again assembled to play, they no sooner saw the storks than they began their song.

"There's a halter for one,
There's a stake for another."

"Are we to be hanged and burned?" asked the young storks.

"No; to be sure not," said the mother. "You shall learn how to fly, and I'll train you. Then we will fly to the meadows, and pay a visit to the frogs, who will bow to us in the water, and sing 'Croak! croak!' And then we'll eat them up, and that will be a right good treat!"

"And what next?" asked the youngsters.

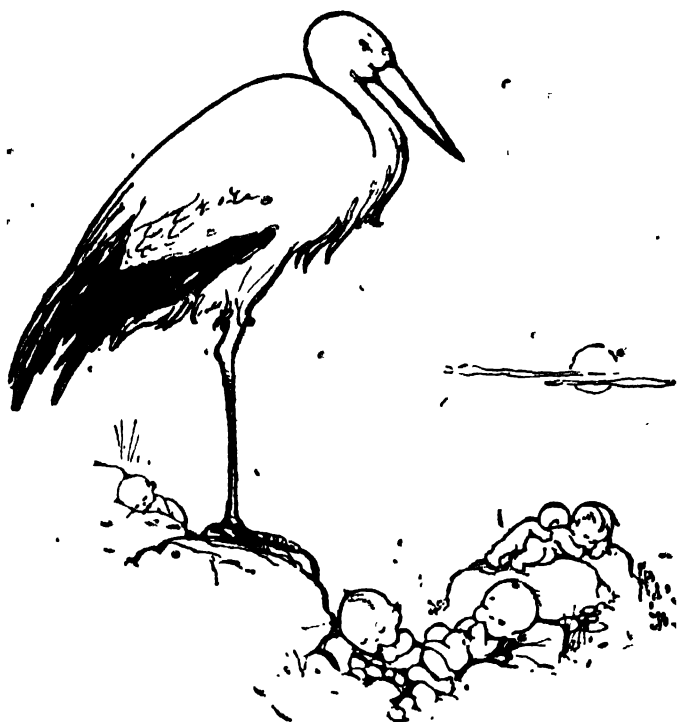
"Then all the storks in the land will assemble, and the autumn manœuvres will begin; and everyone must know how to fly properly, for that is very important. For whoever does not fly as he ought is pierced to death by the general's beak; therefore, mind you learn something when the drilling begins."

"Then we shall be spitted after all, as the boys said—and hark! they are singing it again."

"Attend to me, and not to them," said the mother stork. "After the principal review, we shall fly to the warm countries, far from here, over hills and forests. We fly to Egypt, where there are three-cornered stone houses, one point of which reaches to the clouds—they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can well imagine. And in that same land there is a river which overflows its banks, and turns the whole country into mire. We then go into the mire and eat frogs."

"Oh—oh!" exclaimed all the youngsters.

"It is a delightful place truly! One can eat all day long, and while we are feasting there, in this country there is not a green leaf left upon the trees. It is so cold here that the very clouds freeze in



lumps, and fall down in little rags." It was snow she meant, only she could not explain it better.

"Will the naughty boys freeze in lumps?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not freeze in lumps, but they will be very near doing so, and they will be obliged to sit moping in a gloomy room, while you will be flying about in foreign lands, where there are flowers and warm sunshine."

Some time had now passed by, and the young ones had grown so big that they could stand upright in the nest, and look all about them; and the father stork came every day with nice frogs, little serpents, and all such dainties as storks 'delight in' that he could find. And how funny it was to see all the clever feats he performed to amuse them. He would lay his head right round upon his tail; then he would clatter with his bill just like a little rattle; and then he would tell them stories, all relating to swamps and fens.

"Come, you must now learn to fly," said the mother stork, one day, and the four youngsters were all obliged to come out on the top of the roof. How they did stagger! They tried to poise themselves with their wings, but they had nearly fallen to the ground below.

"Look at me," said the mother. "This is the way to hold your head! And you must place your feet so! Left! right! Left! right! That's what will help you forward in the world." She then flew a little way, and the young ones took a little leap without assistance—but plump! down they fell, for their bodies were still too heavy.

"I won't fly!" said one youngster, creeping back into the nest. "I don't care about going to warm countries."

"Would you like to stay and freeze here in the winter? And wait till the boys come to hang, to burn, or to roast you? Well, then, I'll call them."

"Oh, no!" said the young stork, hopping back

to the roof like the others. On the third day they already began to fly a little, and then they fancied they should be able at once to hover in the air, upborne by their wings, and this they accordingly attempted; when down they fell, and were then obliged to flap their wings as quickly as they could. The boys now came into the street below, singing their song:—

“Stork, stork—fly home and rest.”

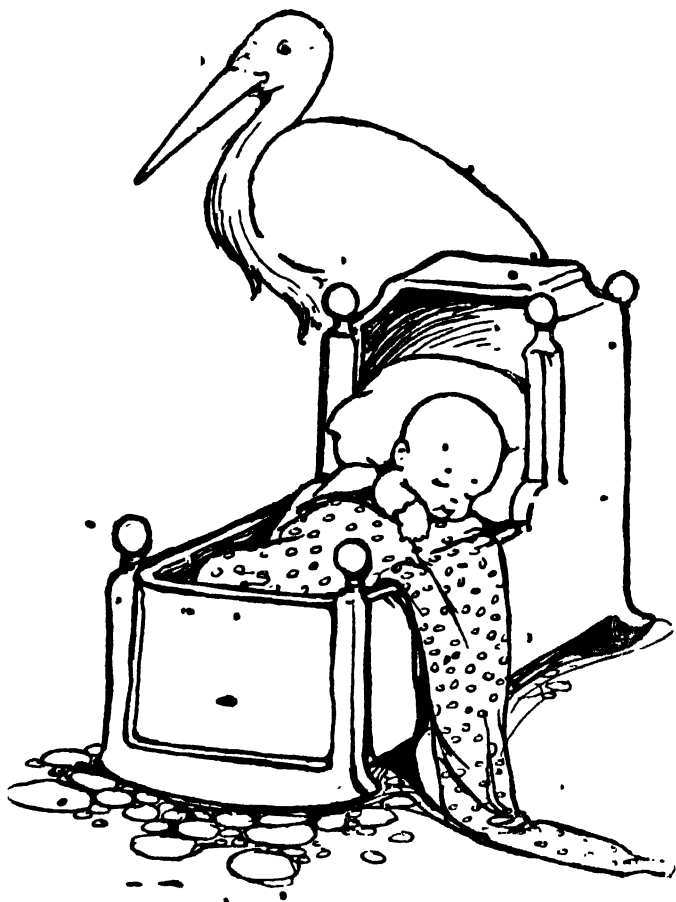
“Shan’t we fly down and peck them?” asked the young ones.

“No; leave them alone,” said the mother. “Attend to me—that’s far more important—one—two—three! Now let’s fly round to the right. One—two—three! now to the left, round the chimney. Now that was very well! That last flap of your wings was so graceful and so proper, that you shall have leave to fly with me to-morrow to the marsh. Several genteel families of storks are coming thither with their children; now let me see that mine are the best bred of all, and mind you strut about with a due degree of pride, for that looks well, and makes one respected.”

“But shan’t we take revenge on the naughty boys?” asked the young storks.

“Let them scream away as much as they like. You can fly up to the clouds and go to the land of the Pyramids, while they are freezing, and can neither see a green leaf nor eat a sweet apple.”

“But we wish to be revenged,” whispered the



young ones amongst each other; and then they were drilled again.

Of all the boys in the street, none seemed more

bent on singing the song that made game of the storks, than the one who had first introduced it; and he was a little fellow, scarcely more than six years old. The young storks, to be sure, fancied that he was at least a hundred, because he was so much bigger than their parents; and besides, what did they know about ages of children or of grown men? So their whole vengeance was to be aimed at this boy, because he had been the first to begin, and had always persisted in mocking them. The young storks were very much exasperated, and when they grew bigger, they grew still less patient of insults, and their mother was at length obliged to promise that they should be revenged, but only on the day of their departure.

"We must first see how you will acquit yourselves at the great review. If you don't do your duty properly, and the general runs his beak through your chests, then the boys will be in the fight, at least so far. So we must wait and see."

"Yes, you shall see," said the youngsters; and they took a deal of pains, and practised every day, till they flew so elegantly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them. .

The autumn now set in, when all the storks began to assemble and to start for the warm countries, leaving winter behind them. And there were evolutions for you! The young fledglings were set to fly over forests and villages, to see

whether they could acquit themselves properly, for they had a long voyage before them. But the young storks gave such proofs of capacity, that their certificate ran as follows:—"Remarkably well—with the present of a frog and a serpent." This was the most palpable proof of the satisfaction they had given; and they might now eat the frog and the serpent, which they lost no time in doing.

"Now for our revenge!" said they.

"Yes, assuredly," said the mother stork; "and I have found out what would be the fairest revenge to take. I know where lies the pond in which all the little human children are waiting till the storks shall come and bring them to their parents. The prettiest little children lie sleeping there, and dreaming far more sweetly than they will ever dream hereafter. Most parents wish for such a little infant, and most children wish for a sister or a brother. Now we'll fly to the pond and fetch one for every child who did not sing the naughty song, and make game of the storks."

"But the naughty, ugly boy, who was the first to begin singing it," cried the young storks, "what shall we do with him?"

"In the pond lies a little infant, who has dreamed itself to death. We'll take him home to the naughty boy, and then he'll cry, because we've brought him a little dead brother. But as for the good boy—you have not forgotten him—who said it was a shame to make game of animals, we will

bring him both a brother and a sister. And as the boy's name is Peter, you shall all be called Peter after him.

And all was done as agreed upon, and all the storks were henceforth named Peter, and are called so still.



THE DAISY.

NOW listen. Out in the country close, by the roadside, there stood a pleasant house; you have seen one like it, without doubt, very often. In front was a small garden enclosed in palings, and full of beautiful flowers. Near the hedge, in the fresh green grass, grew a little daisy. The sun cast his beams as brightly and warmly upon her as upon the large and handsome garden flowers, so the daisy grew from hour to hour. Every morning she unfolded her little white petals, like shining rays round the tiny golden sun in the centre of the blossom. She never thought about being unseen, hidden in the grass, or that she was only a poor, unimportant flower. She felt too happy to care for that, as she turned towards the warm sun, looked up to the blue sky, and listened to the lark singing high above her head. One day, the little flower was feeling as joyful as if it had been a great holiday, and yet it was only Monday. The children were at school, and while they sat on their forms learning their lessons, she, on her little stalk, learnt also from the warm sun, and from everything around her, how good God is; and she was glad to hear the lark in his happy song express exactly her own feelings. And the daisy admired the joyous bird, who could sing so sweetly and fly so high; but she was not sad because she could not do the same. "I can see and hear," thought she; "the sun shines upon me, and the wind caresses

me; what more do I need to make me happy?" Within the palings grew a number of garden flowers, who appeared more proud and conceited in proportion as they were without scent. The peonies considered it a fine thing to be so large, and they puffed themselves out to be bigger than the roses. The tulips knew that they were marked with magnificent colours, and held themselves stiffly and bolt upright, that they might be the more in view. They did not notice the little daisy outside, but she looked at them, thinking, "How rich and handsome they are! No wonder the pretty bird flies down to visit them. How pleased I am that I grow so near them, that I may admire their beautiful appearance!" Just at that moment the lark came flying down, crying "Tweet!" but he did not go near the peonies and tulips; he hopped into the grass near the modest daisy. She trembled for joy, and scarcely knew what to think. The little bird hopped round the daisy, singing, "Oh, what fresh, soft grass, and what a lovely little flower, with gold in its heart and silver on its dress!" for the yellow centre in the daisy looked like gold, and the leaves around were shining white, like silver. How happy the little daisy felt, no one can describe. The bird kissed it with his beak, sang to it, and then soared up again into the blue air above. It was quite a quarter of an hour before the daisy could recover herself. Half ashamed, yet feeling so happy in herself, she glanced at the other flowers; they must have seen the honour she

had received, and would understand her delight and pleasure. But the tulips looked prouder than ever—indeed, they were evidently quite annoyed about it; and the peonies were much disgusted, and could they have spoken, the poor little daisy would have no doubt received a good scolding. They were all out of temper, she could see, and it made her very sorry.

Just then there came into the garden a girl, with a long, sharp knife, which glittered in her hand. She went straight up to the tulips and cut off several of them, one after another.

"Oh, dear," sighed the daisy, "how terrible! It is all over with them now." The girl carried the tulips away, and the daisy felt very glad she grew outside in the grass, and was only a poor little flower. When the sun set she folded up her petals and went to sleep, and dreamt the whole night long of the warm sun and the joyous little bird. The next morning, when the flower happily stretched out her white leaves once more to the warm air and the light, she recognised the voice of the bird, but his song sounded mournful and sad. Alas! he had good cause to be sad—he had been caught, and was fast a prisoner in a cage that hung near by the open window. His song was of the happy time when he could fly in the air, joyous and free; he sang of the young green corn in the fields from which he used to spring higher and higher to sing his glorious song, and now he was a prisoner in a cage! The little daisy wished very much that she

could help him. But what could she do? In her anxiety she forgot all the lovely things around her, the warm sunshine, the blue sky, and her own pretty shining white leaves. Alas! she could think of nothing but the imprisoned bird, and her own inability to assist him.

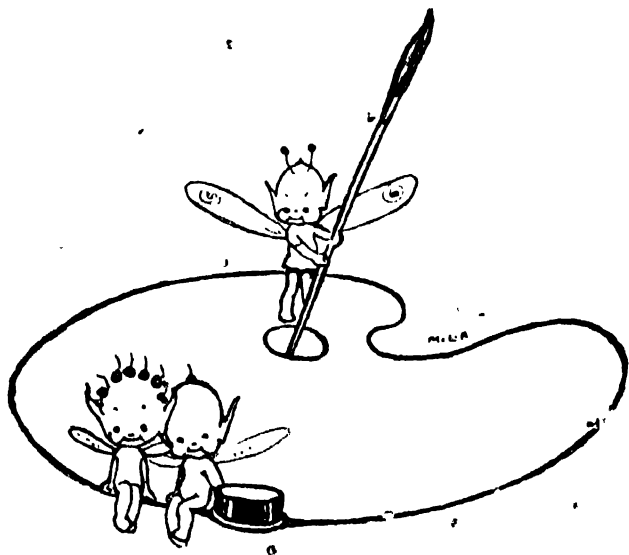
Presently two boys came into the garden; one of them carried a large, sharp knife in his hand, like the one the girl had used to cut down the tulips. They went straight up to the little daisy, who could not think what they were going to do. "We can cut out a nice piece of turf for the lark here," said one of the boys, and he began to cut a square piece round the daisy, so that she stood just in the centre. "Pull up the flower," said the other boy, and the daisy trembled with fear, for to pluck it up would destroy its life, and she wished so much to live and to be taken on the piece of turf to the captive lark in his cage. "No, let it stay," said the boy; "it looks so pretty." So the daisy was left, and was put with the turf into the lark's cage. The poor bird was complaining loudly about his lost freedom, and was beating his wings against the iron bars of his cage. The little daisy could not speak nor utter one word to comfort him, or she would gladly have done so. So the whole morning passed.

"There is no water here," said the captive lark; "they have all gone out and have forgotten to give me a drop of water to drink. My throat is hot and dry; I feel as if I had fire and ice within me, and the air is so sultry. Alas! I shall die. I must bid

farewell to the warm sunshine, the fresh green, and all the beautiful things which God has created." And then he thrust his beak into the cool turf to refresh himself a little with the grass, and his eye fell upon the daisy; then the bird nodded to it and kissed it with his beak, and said, "You also will fade here, you poor little flower! They have given you to me, with the little patch of green grass on which you grow, in exchange for the whole world which was mine out there. Each little blade of grass shall be to me as a great tree, and each of your white leaves as a flower. Alas! you only show me how much I have lost!"

"Oh, if I could only comfort him!" thought the daisy, but she could not move a leaf; yet the scent from her petals was stronger than it usually is in these flowers, and the bird noticed it, and, though he was fainting with thirst, and in his pain pulled up the green blades of grass, he did not touch the flower. The evening came, and yet no one appeared to bring the bird any water; then he stretched out his pretty wings, and shook convulsively, and could only sing, "Tweet! tweet!" in a weak, mournful tone. His little head was bent down towards the flower; the bird's heart was broken from want and longing. Then the flower could not fold her leaves as she had done the evening before, to sleep; but she hung limply, sick, and sorrowful, towards the earth. It was morning when the boys came, and finding the bird dead, they wept many and bitter tears: then they dug a pretty grave for him, and

adorned it with leaves and flowers. The bird's lifeless body was put into a smart red box, and he was buried with great honour. Poor bird ! While he was still living, and could sing, they forgot him, and left him in his cage, suffering want ; but now that he was dead they mourned for him with many tears, and buried him with royal honours. But the turf with the daisy on it was thrown out into the dusty road. No one thought of the little flower which had felt more for the poor bird than any one else, and would have been so glad to help and console him, if only she could have done so.





THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL.

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL.

IT was dreadfully cold, it snowed, and was getting quite dark, for it was evening—yes, the ~~last~~ evening of the year.

Amid the cold and the darkness, a little girl, with bare head, and ~~naked~~ feet, was roaming through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers, when she left home, but that was not of much use, for they were very large slippers; so large, indeed, that they had hitherto been used by her mother; besides, the little creature lost them as she hurried across the street to avoid two carriages that were driving at a fearful rate. One of the slippers was not to be found, and the other was pounced upon by a boy, who ran away with it, saying that it would serve for a cradle when he should have children of his own.

So the little girl went along, with her little bare feet, that were red and blue with cold. She carried a number of matches in an old apron, and she held a bundle of them in her hand. Nobody had bought anything of her the whole livelong day, and nobody had even given her a penny.

She crept along, shivering with cold and hunger, a perfect picture of misery—poor little thing!

The snow-flakes covered her long flaxen hair, which hung in pretty curls round her throat; but she heeded them not.

Lights were streaming from all the windows, and there was a savoury smell of roast goose; for it was St. Silvester's evening. And this she did heed.

She now sat down, cowering in a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she felt colder than ever; yet she dared not return home, for she had not sold a match, and could not bring back a penny.

Her father would certainly beat her; and it was cold enough at home, besides—for they had only the roof above them, and the wind came howling through it, though the largest holes had been stopped with straw and rags.

Her little hands were nearly frozen with cold.

Alas! a single match might do her some good, if she might only draw one out of the bundle, and rub it against the wall, and warm her fingers.

So at last she drew one out. Whist! how it shed sparks and how it burned! It gave out a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it—truly, it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she were sitting before a large iron stove, with polished brass feet, and brass shovel and tongs. The fire burned so blessedly, and warmed so nicely, that the little creature stretched out her feet to warm them likewise, when lo! the flame

expired, the stove vanished, and left nothing but the little half-burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It gave a light, and where it shone upon the wall, the latter became as transparent as a veil, and she could see into the room.

A snow-white table-cloth was spread upon the table, on which stood a splendid china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, sent forth the most savoury fumes. And what was more delightful still, the goose jumped down from the dish, and waddled along the ground with a knife and fork in its breast, up to the poor girl.





The match then went out and nothing remained but the thick, damp wall.

She lit another match.

She now sat under the most magnificent

Christmas-tree, that was larger, and more superbly decked than even the one she had seen through

the glass door at the rich merchant's. A thousand tapers burned on its green branches, and gay pictures, such as one sees on placards, seemed to be looking down upon her. The match then went out.

The Christmas lights kept rising higher and higher. They now looked like stars in the sky. One of them fell down, and left a long streak of fire.

"Somebody is now dying," thought the little girl—for her old grandmother, the only person who had ever loved her, and who was now dead, had told her, that when a star falls it is a sign that a soul is going up to heaven.

She again rubbed a match upon a wall, and it was again light all around; and in the brightness stood her old grandmother, clear and shining like a spirit, yet looking so mild and loving.

"Grandmother," cried the little one; "Oh! take me with you! I know you will go away when the match goes out—you will vanish like the warm stove, and the delicious roast goose, and the fine, large Christmas-tree!"

And she made haste to rub the whole bundle of matches. for she wished to hold her grandmother fast.

And the matches gave a light that was brighter than noon-day. Her grandmother had never appeared so beautiful nor so large. She took the

little girl in her arms, and both flew upwards, all radiant and joyful, far, far above mortal ken—where there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care to be found; for it was to the Land of the Blessed that they had flown.

But, in the cold dawn, the poor girl might be seen leaning against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth: she had been frozen on the last night of the old year.

The new year's sun shone upon the little corpse.

The child sat in the stiffness of death, still holding the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

People said: "She tried to warm herself."

Nobody dreamed of the fine things she had seen, nor in what splendour she had entered upon the joys of the new year, together with her grandmother.

**THUMBELINA
AND OTHER STORIES.**



DESIGNED AND PRINTED IN ENGLAND.
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THUMBELINA.

THERE once lived a woman who wished for a little child, but she did not know where to find one. So she went to an old witch, and said: "I should so like to have a little child; can you tell me what I shall do to find one?"

"Oh! that's easy enough," said the witch. "Here is a barley-corn that is not of the same sort as those which grow in country fields, or which chickens feed upon. Place it in a flower-pot, and you'll see something wonderful."

"I am much obliged to you," said the woman, giving the witch twelve shillings, for that was the price agreed upon. She then went home and planted the barley-corn, when there immediately grew up a beautiful, large flower, that looked like a tulip, only the leaves were closed, just as if it were still in the bud.

"This flower is indeed wondrously beautiful!" cried the woman, kissing its red and yellow leaves; and just as she kissed it, the flower opened with a loud noise. It was a real tulip, as might now be seen, but in the midst of the flower, a tiny girl, of the most delicate and exquisite shape, sat on the green pistil. She was ~~forcely~~ as tall as half one's thumb, and she was therefore called Thumbelina, as expressive of her diminutive size.

An elegant lackered walnut-shell served as her cradle, her mattresses consisted of blue violet-leaves, and a rose-leaf served as her counterpane. Here she slept all night, but in the daytime she played about on the table, where the woman had placed a plate, edged all round by a wreath of flowers, whose stems stood in water. A large tulip-leaf lay in the water, and this served Thumbelina as a boat, which she rowed from one side of the plate to the other; the oars she used were a couple of white horse-hairs. It was a pretty sight to see! And she could sing, too, so sweetly, that the like had never been heard before.

One night, as she lay in her pretty bed, a nasty toad jumped in through a broken pane in the window. The toad was very large, ugly, and wet. She leaped right on to the table where little Thumbelina lay asleep, under her red rose-leaf counterpane.

"She would be a nice wife for my son," said the toad, and she picked up the walnut-shell, with

THUMBELINA.

Thumbelina, asleep in it, and jumped through the window, cradle and all, down into the garden.

A large rivulet flowed through the garden, but the banks were swampy, like a marsh; and here the toad lived with her son, who was every inch as ugly and as nasty as his mother.

"Croak! croak! croak!" was all he could say, when he saw the elegant little maid in her walnut-shell.

"Don't speak so loud, or you'll wake her," said the old toad, "and then she might escape from us, for she is as light as swan's down. We will set her on one of the broad leaves of yonder water-lily in the midst of the brook; it will be like an island to her who is so light and so small. And then she won't be able to run away, while we are preparing the state apartments down under the marsh, where you will live when you are married."

There were a number of water-lilies in the brook, with broad, green leaves, that seemed to be swimming on the surface of the water; the furthest of these leaves happened to be the largest, and thither did the toad swim, and place the walnut-shell containing little Thumbelina.

The tiny, tiny being awake early in the morning, and began to cry bitterly on finding the place she was in; for the leaf was surrounded on all sides by water, and she was wholly unable to reach land.

The old toad, meantime, was below-stairs in the

THUMBELINA.



swamp, busy decorating the room with reeds and sedges, to make it look smart for the reception of her new daughter-in-law ; 'when' her work was finished, she 'swam' over with her son " to the leaf where Thumbelina had

been placed, to fetch away her pretty bedstead, that was to be placed in the bridal-chamber ready for her. The old toad bowed to her in the water, and said: "This is my son who is to be your husband; and you'll live very handsomely down in the marsh."

"Croak! croak! croak!" was all that the son could add to his mother's eloquence.

They then took up the elegant little bed, and swam away, while Thumbelina sat alone on the green leaf, and wept, for she did not like the thought of living with the nasty toad, and still less of marrying her ugly son. The little fishes who were disporting below in the water had seen the toad, and heard, too, what she said; so they now popped out their heads to see the little girl themselves. They had no sooner caught sight of her, than they thought her so pretty, that they felt quite sorry she should be condemned to live below amongst the toads. It must not be, they all agreed. So they gathered round the green stalk in the water below, that kept the leaf fast, and gnawed it off at the root with their teeth, then the leaf floated down the stream, carrying little Thumbelina far beyond the reach of the toad.

Thumbelina sailed past many towns, and the little birds in the branches saw her and sang, "What a lovely little creature!" And the leaf swam and swam till little Thumbelina was travelling far away.

An elegant small white butterfly fluttered about

her continually, and at last alighted on the leaf. Thumbelina pleased him, and she was glad of it; for now the toad could not possibly reach her, and the country she was sailing through was so beautiful! The sun, too, was shining on the waters, and making them sparkle like liquid gold. She took off her sash and tied one end round the butterfly, while she fastened the other end to the leaf, which now glided on much faster, and she with it, as she stood upon its surface.

A large cockchafer, who happened to pass, no sooner saw her than he pounced upon her delicate form with his claws and flew away with her to a tree. The green leaf floated down the stream, and the butterfly with it, for he was bound fast to the leaf, and could not disentangle himself.

Oh, how frightened was poor Thumbelina, when the cockchafer flew off with her to the tree. But she was principally grieved on account of the white butterfly, whom she had fastened to the leaf, and who would die of hunger if unable to loosen his bonds. But the cockchafer did not trouble himself about that. He sat down by her side on the largest green leaf of the tree, gave her some honey from the flowers to eat, and told her she was very pretty, though so unlike a cockchafer. After a while, all the cockchafers that inhabited the tree came to pay them a visit. After staring at Thumbelina, the cockchafer young ladies turned up their feelers contemptuously, saying: "She has only two legs—how pitiful to be sure!" "She has no feelers,"

observed another. "She is so slim in the waist—faugh! she is like a human being! How ugly she is!" said all the female cockchafers, although Thumbelina was so remarkably pretty. The cockchafer who had run away with her, had, at first appreciated her beauty, but when all his lady friends pronounced her to be ugly, he finished by thinking so, and declared he would not have her, and that she might go wherever she liked. So they now flew down from the tree with her, and placed her upon a daisy, and there she sat, and wept at thinking how ugly she must be since even the cockchafers would not admit her amongst them, and yet she was the loveliest creature that can be imagined, as delicate and tender as the sweetest rose leaf.

Poor little Thumbelina lived through the whole summer all alone in the wide forest. She wove some blades of grass into a kind of matting to serve for a hammock, and she hung it up under a leaf of clover to protect her from the rain; she gathered sweets from the flowers for her nourishment, and drank of the dew that stood on the leaves every morning. Thus summer and autumn passed by pleasantly enough; but now came winter—cold, dreary winter! All the birds that had sung to her so sweetly now flew away; the trees and flowers had withered; the large leaf of clover under which she had lived had now rolled itself up like an awning that is put by, and nothing remained but a yellow, withered stalk; she felt dreadfully cold,

for her clothes were in tatters, and so small and so delicate as poor Thumbelina was, there seemed no chance for her to escape being frozen to death. It now began to snow, and every flake that fell upon her was as bad as a shovelful would be to us, because we are of the natural size, and she was only an inch high. She then wrapped herself up in a dry leaf, but it cracked in the middle, and could not keep her warm; so she kept shivering with cold.

Near the forest where she had taken up her summer quarters, lay a large corn-field; only the corn had long since been removed, and nothing remained but the bare, dry stubble that stood in rows in the frozen soil. It was like crossing a huge forest for her to wander through one of these, and she trembled with cold from head to foot. At last, however, she reached the door of a field-mouse, who had burrowed her dwelling under the stubble. There the field-mouse lived snugly and securely enough, and had a whole roomful of corn, an excellent kitchen, and a dining room. Poor little Thumbelina stood before the door, like a poor beggar girl, and begged for a little bit of barley-corn; for she had eaten nothing whatever for the last two days.

"You poor little animal!" said the field-mouse, for she was a good old field-mouse on the whole, "come into my warm room, and dine with me."

As Thumbelina pleased her, she said: "You are welcome to stay all the winter with me, only you must keep my room clean and tidy, and tell me



stories, for I am very fond of 'hearing them." And Thumbelina did what the good old field-mouse required, and a very comfortable time she had of it.

"We shall soon have a visitor coming to see us," said the field-mouse; "I have a neighbour, who calls on me once a week. He is still better off than I am, for he has large rooms, and wears a handsome black fur pelisse. If you could have him for a husband, you would be well provided for indeed. Only he can't see at all. You must mind and tell him some of your best stories." But Thumbelina did not care anything about him; for the field-mouse's neighbour was a mole.

At length he came in his black fur pelisse and paid his visit. Dame Field-Mouse said he was very rich and very learned and that his dwelling was more than twenty times larger than hers. He might possess some learning, but he could not bear either the sun or the beautiful flowers, and he always spoke slightly of both, just because he had never seen them.

Thumbelina was obliged to sing, and so she

sang: "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away heme," besides other songs. And the mole fell in love with her on account of her sweet voice; but he said nothing, because he was a very wary mole.

A short time since, he had burrowed a long underground passage leading from his house to the field-mouse's dwelling; and both the mouse and Thumbelina were now free to walk in it as often as they liked. But he warned them not to be frightened at a dead bird that was lying in the passage. It was a complete bird with beak and feathers, apparently only just dead, and who was now buried on the spot where the mole had made his vault.

The mole held in his mouth a piece of phosphorescent wood, that shines like fire in the dark, and went before to light them through the long, gloomy passage. When they came to the spot where lay the dead bird, the mole bored a hole through the ceiling with his broad nose, so that the earth gave way, and the light could come through. On the ground lay a dead swallow, with his pretty wings pressed close to his sides, and his feet and head drawn under the feathers; the poor bird had evidently died of cold. Thumbelina was moved to pity, for she was so fond of all little birds, for they had sung and twittered to her so sweetly all the summer! But the mole only pushed the dead bird aside with his short legs, unfeelingly observing: "He will not sing any more! What a miserable fate it must be to be born a little bird! Thank

Heaven ! none of my children will be so badly off as that ! For a bird who can do nothing but say 'twit ! 'twit ! ' must needs starve in winter."

"You speak very rationally," said the field-mouse. "What, indeed, does a bird get for all his twit-twit, when the winter sets in ? He must starve and get frozen. But I suppose that is vastly genteel." Little Thumbelina said nothing ; but when the two others had turned their backs, she stooped down to the dead bird, and stroking aside the feathers that covered his head, she kissed his closed eyes. "Perhaps it was he who sang so sweetly to me in the summer," thought she, "and how he used to delight me, dear pretty bird that he was !"

The mole now stopped up the hole again, and then accompanied the ladies home. But Thumbelina could not sleep that night ; so she got up, and wove a nice large carpet, out of some hay, which she wove and spread over the dead bird, and then, having found in the field-mouse's room some down plucked from flowers, and as soft as wool, she laid it on each side of the bird, that he might lie warmly in the cold earth.

"Farewell, you pretty bird," said she, "farewell ; and take my thanks for your pretty singing throughout the summer, when the trees were green, and the warm sun shone down upon us." She then laid her head on the bird's breast ; but immediately she was startled, for it felt as if something went thump ! thump ! inside. This was the

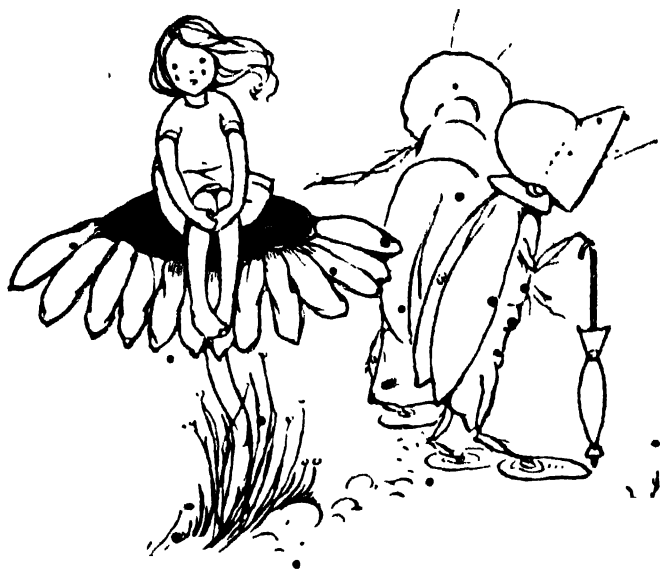
bird's heart; for the bird was not dead, he had only been senseless; and now that he was warmed, he began to revive.

In autumn all the swallows fly away to warm countries; but if one of them happens to be belated, it generally becomes frozen, and drops down as if dead, and remains lying wherever it happens to fall—and the cold snow then covers it over. Thumbelina trembled with fright, for the bird was very, very 'big compared to herself, who was only an inch high. Still, she took courage, and laying the cotton more thickly round the poor swallow, she fetched a leaf of curled mint, that served for her counterpane, and spread it over the bird's head. In the following night, she again stole to see him, when she found him alive, but very faint. He could only just open his eyes for a moment to look at Thumbelina, as she stood before him with a piece of phosphorescent wood in her hand—for this was the only lantern she could obtain.

"Thank you, my pretty little maiden," said the sick swallow; "I am nicely warmed now, and I shall soon get my strength again, and be able to fly abroad in the warm sunshine."

"Oh!" cried she, "but it is cold out of doors, for it snows and freezes. Keep in your warm bed, and I'll take care of you."

She then brought the swallow some water in the leaf of a flower, and after he had drunk, he told her how he had torn his wing on a bramble-bush,



and had, therefore, not been able to fly as fast as the other swallows, who had flown far away to warmer lands. So, at last, he fell to the ground, but could not recollect what happened afterwards, nor how he came there.

The swallow remained below during the whole winter; and Thumbelina nursed him carefully, and was very fond of him; but neither the mole nor the field-mouse knew anything about it; for they could not bear swallows.

As soon as spring returned, and the sun began to warm the earth, the swallow bid Thumbelina farewell; and she opened the hole the mole had

once made in the ceiling, to let him out. The sun shone upon them so brightly, and the swallow asked her if she would go with him, as she could sit on his back, and they might fly far away into the green forest. But Thumbelina knew it would vex the old field-mouse if she were to leave her in that manner.

"No, I cannot," said little Thumbelina.

"Farewell! farewell! you kind and pretty girl," said the swallow, flying out into the broad sunshine. Thumbelina looked after him, and tears rose to her eyes, for she had a kindly feeling for the poor swallow.

"Twit! Twit!" sang the bird, as he flew about in the green woods. Little Thumbelina was very sad. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn, which had been sown in the field over the field-mouse's dwelling, had now grown to be tall, and formed quite a thick forest for the poor little maiden, who was only an inch high.

"You are going to be married, little Thumbelina," said the field-mouse. "My neighbour has asked for your hand. Only think what a piece of luck for a poor girl! Now you must set about making your wedding outfit; both woollen and linen clothes shall you have, for you must not be short of anything when you are the mole's wife."

So Thumbelina was obliged to spin away; and the field-mouse hired four spiders to weave for her day and night. The mole came to see her

every evening, and was always observing, that when the summer would be over, the sun would lose its warmth, and that at present it burnt the ground, and made it as hard as a stone. And when the summer was but over, then his wedding with Thumbelina should take place. But she was not pleased, for she could not bear the tiresome mole. Every morning, at sunrise, and every evening, at sunset, did she steal out to the door, and when the wind blew the ears of corn aside, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how bright and beautiful it was abroad, and longed to see her dear swallow again. But he would never come again; for he had assuredly flown away to the lovely green forest.

By the time it was autumn, Thumbelina's outfit was quite ready. "In four weeks' time the wedding shall take place," said the field-mouse to her. But Thumbelina wept, and said she would not have the tiresome mole.

"Twiddle-Twaddle!" quoth the field-mouse. "Don't be obstinate, or I shall bite you with my white teeth! He is a very well-favoured mole. The Queen herself has not such a fine black fur pelisse. His kitchen and cellar are full. So thank Providence for what is sent you!"

So the wedding was to take place. The mole had already come to fetch Thumbelina, and she was to live with him deep under ground, and never to come out to greet the warm sun, because he could not bear it. The poor girl was so sad to think

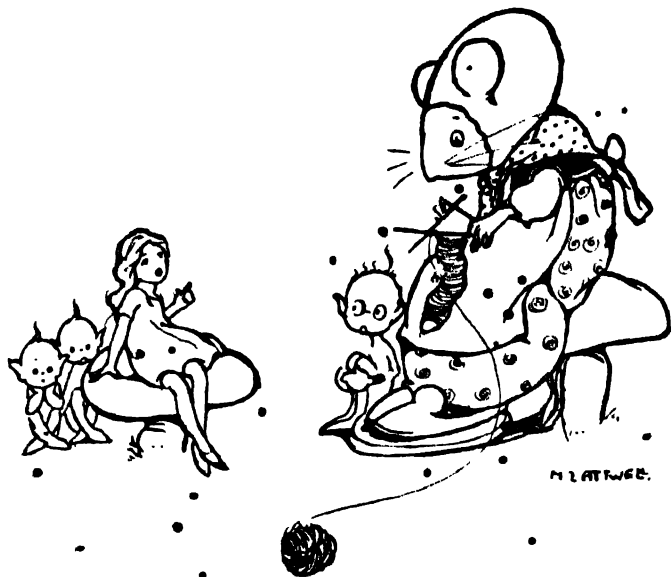
she must bid farewell to the beautiful sun, which she had at least been allowed to look at from the door, when she lived with the field-mouse.

"Farewell, bright sun!" said she, stretching out her arms, and going a few steps away from the field-mouse's dwelling—for the harvest was now over, and nothing was left but the dry stubble. "Farewell! Farewell!" she said, flinging her arms round a little red flower that stood near. "Greet the little swallow in my name, if you should happen to see him."

"Twit! Twit!" she heard above her head; and looking up, she saw it was the swallow himself, who was just passing by. As soon as he spied Thumbelina he was much pleased; and she told him how she disliked the idea of marrying the ugly mole, as she must then live deep below in the earth, where the sun never shone. Nor could she help crying as she spoke.

"The cold winter is coming on," cried the little swallow. "I am going to fly to warm lands; will you come with me? You can sit on my back. Bind yourself on securely with your sash, and then we will fly away from the ugly mole and his gloomy abode—far, far away, over the mountains, till we reach the warm climates, where the sun shines far more brightly than here, where the summer is eternal, and where grow the fairest flowers. Only fly with me, you dear little Thumbelina, who saved my life when I lay frozen in that dreary cellar."

"Yes, I will go with you," said little Thumbe-



lina; and she placed herself on the bird's back, with her feet resting on his spread wings, and fastened her sash to one of the strongest feathers; and then the swallow flew up high into the air, over both forest and sea, high above the highest snow-capped mountains. And little Thumbelina would have frozen in the cold air, had she not crept under the bird's warm feathers, only leaving her little head free to admire the beautiful landscape below. •

At length they reached the warm lands: there the sun shone far more brightly than before, the sky

seemed twice as high from the earth, and the finest black and white grapes grew on the hedges and in the ditches; while in the woods hung lemons and oranges. There was a sweet perfume of myrtles and balm-mint; and along the roads were lovely children running, playing with large parti-coloured butterflies. But the swallow flew still further till the landscape became more and more beautiful, and they reached a palace of dazzling white marble, built in ancient times, on the borders of a blue lake, and overshadowed by the most splendid green trees. Vines were climbing up its tall pillars, and quite at the top might be seen a number of swallows' nests, in one of which lived the swallow that was carrying Thumbelina.

"This is my house," said the swallow; "but it would not do for you to live with me—I have not such accommodation as could suit you. So now look out for one of the prettiest flowers amongst those blooming below there, and I will set you upon it, and you shall be as happy as you can wish."

"This is delightful!" cried she, clapping her little hands.

A large white marble pillar lay broken into three pieces upon the ground, and between each of these clefts grew the most beautiful white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbelina, and placed her on one of the broad leaves of these flowers. But, how astonished was she on perceiving a little

mannikin, as white and transparent as glass, sitting in the middle of the flower. He wore the prettiest golden crown on his head, and the most delicate wings on his shoulders; and he was himself not larger than little Thumbelina. This was the spirit of the flower. For a tiny man, or a tiny woman, dwells in every flower; but this was the King of them all.

"Oh, how beautiful he is!" whispered Thumbelina to the swallow.



The little Prince was frightened at the swallow, who was quite a giant bird to him who 'was so small and so delicate; but when he saw Thumbelina he was quite charmed, for she was the prettiest girl he had ever beheld. Therefore he took his gold crown off his head and placed it on hers, and asked her name, and whether she would become his wife, and be Queen over all the flowers? This, indeed, was a different sort of suitor to the toad's son or the mole in his fur pelisse!

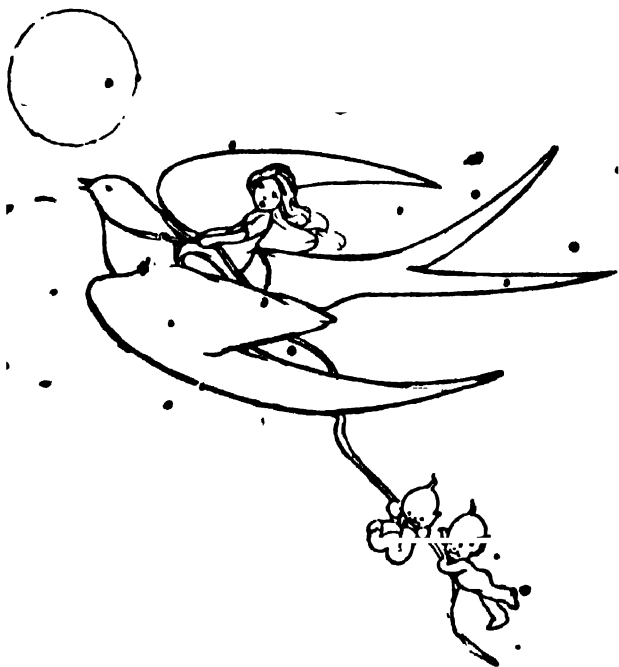
She therefore said, "Yes" to the handsome Prince's offer.

Then there came forth a little lady, or a tiny gentleman, from every flower, all of them so exquisitely beautiful that it was a treat to behold them. And each brought Thumbelina a present—the best of all being a handsome pair of wings, like those of a large white fly. These were fastened to Thumbelina's shoulders, and then she could fly from flower to flower.

So there was much rejoicing; and the little swallow, who sat alone in his nest, was called upon to sing a wedding song, which he performed as well as he could, though he felt rather sad at heart, as he was so fond of Thumbelina that he would never willingly have parted from her.

"You shall no longer be called Thumbelina," said the spirit of the flowers to her; "for that is not a pretty name, and you are so pretty. We will call you Maia."

"Farewell! farewell!" said the little swallow, with a heavy heart, on leaving the warm lands to fly back to Denmark. There he has a little nest near the window where lives the man who wrote this story. He sang "twit! twit!" to him, and that is the way we came by the whole history.



THE STORY OF THE YEAR.

IT was late in January, and a terrible snowstorm was pelting down. The snow whirled through the streets and lanes; the window-panes seemed plastered with snow on the outside; snow fell down in masses from the roofs; and a sudden hurry had seized on the people, for they ran and jostled, and fell into each other's arms, and as they clutched each other fast for a moment, they felt that they were safe at least for that length of time. Coaches and horses seemed frosted with sugar. The footmen stood with their backs against the carriages, so as to turn their faces from the blast of the wind. The foot passengers kept in the shelter of the carriages, which could only move slowly on in the deep snow; and when the storm at last lessened in fury and a narrow path was swept clean alongside the houses, the people stood still in this path when they met, for none liked to take the first step aside into the deep snow to let the other pass him. Thus they stood, silent and motionless, till, as if by common consent, each sacrificed one leg, and, stepping aside, buried it in the deep snow-heap.

Towards evening it became calm. The sky looked as if it had been swept, and had become more lofty and clear. The stars looked as if they

were quite new, and some of them were amazingly bright and pure. It froze so hard that the snow creaked, and the uppercrust of snow might well have grown hard enough to bear the Sparrows in the morning dawn. These little birds hopped up and down where the sweeping had been done; but they found very little food, and were not a little cold.

"Piep!" said one of them to another; "they call this a New Year, and it is worse than the last! We might just as well have kept the old one. I'm displeased, and I've a right to be so."

"Yes; and the people ran about and fired off shots to celebrate the New Year," said a shivering little Sparrow; "and they threw pans and pots against the doors, and were quite boisterous with joy because the Old Year had gone. I was glad of it, too, because I hoped we should have had warm days; but that has come to nothing—it is freezing much harder than before. People have made a mistake in reckoning the time!"

"That they have!" a third put in, who was old, and had a white poll; "they've something they call the calendar—it's an invention of their own—and everything has to be arranged according to that; but it won't do. When Spring comes, then the year begins. Nature's voice speaks, and I reckon by that."

"But when will Spring come?" asked the others.

"It will come when the stork comes back. But

his movements are very uncertain, and here in town no one knows anything about it; in the country they are better informed. Shall we fly out there and wait? At any rate, we shall be nearer to Spring when we are there."

"Yes, that may be all very well," observed one of the Sparrows, who had been hopping about for a long time, chirping, without saying anything of importance. "I've found a few comforts here in town, which I am afraid I should miss out in the country. Near this neighbourhood, in a courtyard, there lives a family of people, who have taken the very sensible notion of placing three or four flower pots against the wall, with their mouths all turned inwards, and the bottom of each pointing outwards. In each flower-pot a hole has been cut, big enough for me to fly in and out at. I and my husband have built a nest in one of those pots, and have brought up our young family there. The family of people, of course, made the whole arrangement that they might have the pleasure of seeing us, or else they would not have done it. It pleases them also to strew crumbs of bread; and so we have food, and are in a manner provided for. So I think, my husband and I will stay where we are, although we are not very well pleased—but we shall stay."

"And we will fly out into the country to see if Spring is not coming." And away they flew.

Out in the country it was hard winter, a few degrees lower than in the town. The sharp winds

swept across the snow-covered fields. The farmer, muffled in warm garments, sat in his sledge, beating his arms across his breast to warm himself, and the whip lay across his knees. The horses ran till they smoked again. The snow crackled, and the Sparrows hopped about in the ruts, shivering and crying, "Cheep, cheep! when will Spring come? It is very long in coming!"

"Indeed, very long!" sounded from the next snow-covered hill, far over the field. It might be the echo which was heard, or perhaps the words were spoken by yonder wonderful old man, who sat, not heeding wind or weather, high on the heap of snow. He was quite in white, dressed like a peasant in a coarse white coat of frieze; he had long white hair, and his face was quite pale, with big blue eyes.

"Who is that old man yonder?" asked the Sparrows.

"I know who he is," croaked an old Raven, who sat on the fence, and was condescending enough to acknowledge that we are all like little birds in the sight of Heaven, and so was not above speaking to the Sparrows, and giving them information. "I know who the old man is. It is Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, as the calendar says, but is guardian to little Prince Spring, who is coming. Yes, Winter still bears sway here. Ugh! the cold makes you shiver, does it not, you little ones?"

"You see. Did I not tell the truth?" said the

smallest Sparrow. "The calendar is only an invention of man, and is not arranged according to Nature. They ought to leave these things to us, who are made much more clever than they."

And one week passed away, and another went by. The frozen lake lay hard and stiff, looking like a sheet of lead, and damp icy mists were hovering over the land; the great black crows flew about in long rows, silently; and it seemed as if Nature slept. Then a sunbeam glided along over the lake, and made it shine like burnished silver. The snowy covering on the field and on the hill did not glitter as it had done; but the white form, Winter himself, still sat there, his gaze fixed immovably upon the south. He did not notice that the snowy carpet seemed to sink, as it were, into the earth, and that here and there a little green grass patch appeared, and that all these patches were crowded with Sparrows, who cried, "Kee-wit, kee-wit! Is Spring coming at last?"

"Spring!" The cry resounded over field and meadow, and through the black-brown woods, where the moss still glimmered in bright green upon the tree trunks, and from the south the first two storks came flying through the air. On the back of each sat a lovely little child—a girl and a boy. They greeted the earth with a kiss, and wherever they set their feet, white flowers grew up from beneath the snow. Then they went hand in hand to the old ice man, Winter, clung to his breast, embracing him, and in a moment they, and

he, and all the region around were hidden in a thick damp mist, dark and heavy, that closed over all like a veil. Then the wind arose, and it rushed roaring along, and drove away the mist with heavy blows, so that the sun shone warmly forth. Winter himself vanished, and the beautiful children of Spring sat upon the throne of the year.

"The New Year has truly come now!" cried each of the Sparrows. "Now we shall get our rights, and have amends for the severe winter."

Wherever the two children turned, green buds burst forth on bushes and trees, the grass shot upwards, and the cornfields turned green and became more and more lovely. And the little maiden strewed flowers all around. Her apron, which she held up before her, was always full of them; they seemed to spring up there, for her lap remained full, however plentifully she strewed the blossoms around; and in her eagerness she scattered a snow of blossoms over apple trees and peach trees, so that they stood in full beauty before their green leaves had fairly come forth.

And she and the boy clapped their hands, and then flocks of birds came flying up, nobody knew whence, and they all twittered and sang, "Spring has come!"

What a lovely sight was all around! Many an old granny crept forth over the threshold into the sunshine, and moved gleefully about, casting a glance at the yellow flowers, which shone every-

where in the fields just as they used to do when she was young. The world grew young again to her, and she said, "It is a blessed day out here to-day!"

The forest still wore its brown-green dress, made of buds; but the thyme was already there, fresh and fragrant; there were masses of violets; anemones and primroses came forth, and sap and strength were in every blade of grass. It was certainly a beautiful carpet, and who could resist sitting down there? And so the young Spring children sat hand in hand, and sang and smiled, and grew on.

A mild rain fell down upon them from the sky, but they did not notice it, for the raindrops were mingled with their own tears of joy. They kissed each other, and were betrothed, and in the same moment the buds of the woods were unfurled, and when the sun rose, the forest stood there arrayed in green.

And hand in hand the pair wandered under the pendant ceiling of fresh leaves, where the rays of the sun gleamed through the openings in lovely, ever-changing hues. What virgin purity, what refreshing balm in the delicate leaves. The brooks and streams rippled merrily among the green velvety rushes, and over the coloured pebbles. All nature sang of abundance and ever-increasing plenty. And the cuckoo sang and the lark carolled. It was a charming spring; but the willows had woolly gloves over their blossoms:

they were desperately careful, and that is rather wearisome.

And days went by and weeks went by, and the heat grew greater and greater. Hot waves of air came through the corn, that became yellower and yellower. The white water-lily of the North spread its great green leaves over the shining mirror of the woodland lakes, and the fishes sought out the shady spots beneath them; and at the sheltered side of the wood where the sun shone down upon the walls of the farm-house, warming the blooming roses and the cherry trees which hung full of juicy black berries, almost hot with his fierce beams, there sat the lovely wife of Summer, the same being whom we have seen as a child and as a bride; and her glance was fixed upon the black gathering clouds, which, in wavy outlines—blue-black and heavy—were piling themselves up, like mountains, higher and higher. They came from three sides, and, growing like a stormy sea, they came swooping towards the forest, where every sound had been silenced as if by magic. Every breath of air was hushed, every bird was mute. There was a solemnity and a suspense throughout all Nature; but in the highways and lanes, foot-passengers and riders, and men in carriages, were hurrying to get under shelter. Then suddenly there was a flashing of light as if the sun were burst forth—flaming, burning, all-devouring! Then the darkness returned amid a rolling crash. The rain poured down in streams, and in

turn there was darkness and blinding light, in turn silence and deafening clamour. The young, brown, feathery reeds on the moor moved to and fro in long waves, the twigs of the woods were hidden in a mist of waters, and still came darkness and light, and still silence and roaring followed one another. The grass and corn lay beaten down and swamped, looking as though they could never lift up themselves again. But soon the rain fell only in gentle drops, the sun peered through the clouds, the water-drops glittered like diamonds on the leaves, the birds sang, the fishes leaped up from the surface of the lake, the gnats danced in the sunshine, and there on the rock by the salt heaving sea sat Summer himself—a strong man with sturdy limbs, and long dripping hair—there he sat, in the sunshine, strengthened by the cool bath. All Nature round about was renewed; everything stood luxuriant, strong, and beautiful; it was Summer—warm, lovely Summer.

And pleasant and sweet was the fragrance that streamed upwards from the rich clover-field, where the bees swarmed round the old ruined place of meeting; the bramble wound itself around the altar stone, which, washed by the rain, glittered in the sunshine; and thither flew the Queen-bee with her swarm, and prepared wax and honey. Only Summer saw it, he and his strong wife; for them the altar table stood covered with the offerings of Nature.

And the evening sky shone like gold—shone as

no church dome can shine ; and between the evening glory and the morning red there was moonlight—it was Summer.

And days went by, and weeks passed away. The bright scythes of the reapers gleamed in the corn-fields ; the branches of the apple trees bent, weighed down with red and yellow fruit. The hops smelt sweetly, hanging in large clusters ; and under the hazel bushes, where hung bunches of nuts, rested a man and woman—Summer and his quiet consort.

“What wealth !” exclaimed the woman, “what blessings are spread all around ! Everywhere the scene looks home-like and good ; and yet, I know not why, I long for peace and rest—I know not how to express it. Now they are already ploughing again in the field. The people want to gain more and more. See the storks flock together, and follow at a little distance behind the plough—the bird of Egypt that carried us through the air. Do you remember how we came as children to this land of the North ? We brought with us lovely flowers and pleasant sunshine, and foliage to the woods. The wind has treated them roughly, and they have become dark and brown like the trees of the South, but they do not, like them, bear fruit.”

“Do you wish to see the golden fruit ?” said Summer ; “then rejoice.”

And he lifted his arm, and the leaves of the forest put on hues of red and gold, and beautiful tints spread over all the woodland. The rose bush

gleamed with scarlet hips; the elder branches hung down with great heavy bunches of dark berries; the wild chestnuts fell ripe from their dark husks, and in the depths of the forests the violets bloomed for the second time.

But the Queen of the Year became more and more silent, and yet paler.

"It blows cold," she said, "and night brings damp mists. I long for the land of my childhood."

And she saw the storks fly away, one and all; and she stretched forth her hand towards them. She looked up at the nests, which stood deserted. In one of them the long-stalked corn-flower was growing; in another, the yellow mustard-seed, as if the nest were only there for its protection; and the Sparrows were flying about them.

"Cheep! cheep! where has the master gone? I suppose he can't bear it when the wind blows, and that therefore he has left the country. I wish him a pleasant journey."

The forest leaves became more and more yellow, leaf fell down upon leaf, and the stormy winds of autumn howled. The year was now far advanced, and the Queen of the Year reclined upon the fallen yellow leaves, and looked with mild eyes at the gleaming star, and her husband stood by her. A gust swept through the leaves, which fell again in a shower, and the Queen was gone, but a butterfly, the last of the season, fluttered through the cold air.

The wet fogs came, an icy wind blew, and the

long, dark nights drew on apace. The Ruler of the year stood there with locks white as snow, but he knew not that it was his hair that was so white—he thought snowflakes were falling from the clouds; and soon a thin covering of snow was spread over the fields, and then the church-bells pealed out for Christmas-time. •

“The bells ring for the New-born,” said the Ruler of the Year. “Soon the new King and Queen will be born, and I shall go to rest, as my wife has done—to rest in yonder shining star.”

And in the fresh green fir wood, where the snow lay, stood the Angel of Christmas, and consecrated the young trees that were to adorn his feast. •

“May there be joy in the room and under the green boughs,” said the Ruler of the Year. In a few weeks he had become a very old man, white as snow. “My time for rest draws near, and the young pair of the year will soon claim my crown and sceptre.” •

“But the might be thine still,” said the Angel of Christmas; “it is for power, not yet the rest. Let the snow lie warmly upon the young seed. Learn to bear it, that another receives homage while thou yet reignest. Learn to bear being forgotten while yet alive. The hour of thy release will come when Spring appears.” •

“And when will Spring come?” asked Winter.

“It will come when the stork returns.” • •

And with white locks and snowy beard, cold, bent, and hoary, but strong as the wintry

storm and firm as ice, old Winter sat on the snowy drift on the hill, looking towards the south, where Winter before had sat and gazed. The ice crackled, the snow creaked, the skaters skimmed to and fro on the smooth lakes, ravens and crows stood out strongly and picturesquely upon the white ground, and not a breath of wind stirred. And in the quiet air old Winter clenched his fists, and the ice was fathoms thick between land and land.

Then the Sparrows came again out of the town, and asked, "Who is that old man, yonder?"

And the Raven sat there again, or a son of his, which comes to quite the same thing, and answered them and said, "It is Winter, the old man of the last year. He is not dead, as the almanack says, but he is the guardian of Spring, who is coming."

"When will the Spring come?" asked the Sparrows. "Then we shall have good times and a better rule. The old one was worth nothing."

And Winter nodded in quiet thought at the leafless forest, where every tree showed the graceful form and bend of its twigs; and during the sleep of Winter the icy mists of the clouds came down, and the ruler dreamed of his youthful days, and of the time of his manhood, and towards the morning dawn the whole wood was clothed in glittering hoar frost. That was the summer dream of Winter, and the sun scattered the hoar-frost from the boughs.

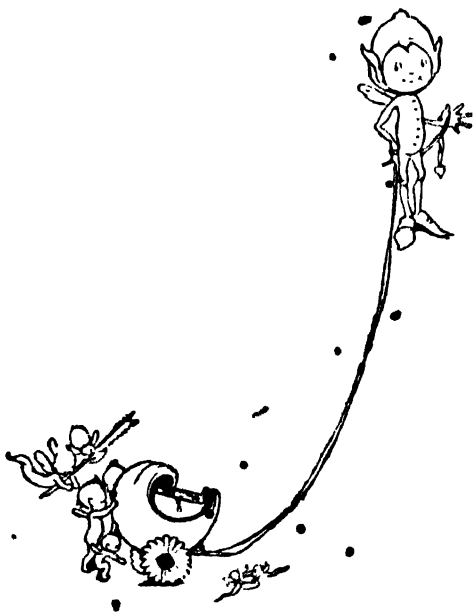
"When will Spring come?" asked the Sparrows.

"The Spring!" sounded like an echo from the

hills on which the snow lay. The sun grew warmer, the snow melted, and the birds twittered, "Spring is coming!"

And aloft through the air came the first stork, and the second followed him. A lovely child sat on the back of each, and they alighted on the field, kissing the earth and the old silent man, and he disappeared, shrouded in the cloudy mist. And the story of the year was done.

"That is all very well," said the Sparrows; "it is very beautiful too; but it is not according to the almanack, and therefore it cannot be correct at all."



THE HAPPY FAMILY.

THE biggest leaf here in the country is certainly the burdock leaf. Put one in front of your waist and it looks like an apron, and if you lay it upon your head it is nearly as good as an umbrella, for it is really remarkably large. • A burdock never grows alone; where there is one plant there are several more. It's splendid to behold, and all this splendour is snails' food; the great white snails, which the grand people in ancient times used to have made into fricassees, and when they had eaten them they would say, "Ha, that is very good!" for they had the idea that it tasted delicious. These snails fed on burdock leaves, and that's why burdocks were grown.

Now, there was an old estate, on which people ate snails no more. The snails had died out, but the burdocks had not. These latter grew and grew in all the avenues and on all the beds—there was no hindering them; the place became quite a forest of burdocks. Here and there stood an apple or plum tree; except for this, nobody would have thought a garden was once there. Everything was burdock, and among the burdocks lived the two last ancient Snails.

They did not know themselves how old they were, but they could very well remember that there had been very many more of them, and that they were descended from a foreign family, and that the whole

forest had been planted for them and theirs. They had never been away from home, but they were aware that something existed in the world called the *ducal palace*, and that there one was boiled, and turned black, and was laid upon a silver dish; but what was done afterwards they did not know. Moreover, they could not imagine what that might be, being boiled and laid upon a silver dish; but it was allowed to be fine, and particularly grand! Neither the cockchafer, nor the toad, nor the earthworm, whom they asked about it, could give them any information, for none of their own families had ever been boiled and laid on silver dishes.

The old white Snails were the grandest in the world; they knew that! The forest was there for their sake, and the ducal palace also, so that they might be boiled and laid on silver dishes.

They led a very quiet and happy life, and as they themselves were childless, they had adopted a little common Snail, which they brought up as their own child. But the little creature would not grow, for it was only a common Snail, though the old people, and the mother in particular, declared one could easily see how he grew; and when the father could not see it, she requested him to feel the little Snail's shell, and he felt it, and acknowledged that she was right.

One day it rained very hard.

"Hear how it's drumming on the burdock leaves, rum-dum-dum! rum-dum-dum!" said the Father-Snail.

"That's what I call drops," said the mother. "It's running straight down the stalks. You'll see it will be wet here directly. I'm pleased indeed that we have our good houses, and that the little one has his own. There has been more done for us than for any other creature; it can be seen very plainly that we are the grand people of the world! We have houses from our birth, and the burdock forest has been planted for us. I should like to know how far it stretches, and what lies beyond it."

"There's nothing," said the Father-Snail, "that can be better than here at home; I have nothing at all to wish for."

"Yes," said the mother, "I should like to be taken to the ducal palace, and to be boiled and laid upon a silver dish; that has been done to all our ancestors, and you may be sure it's quite an uncommon honour."

"The ducal palace has maybe fallen in," said the Father-Snail, "or the forest of burdocks perhaps has grown over it, so that the people can't get out at all. You need not go so fast—but you always hurry so, and the little one is beginning just the same way. Has he not been creeping up that stalk these three days? It makes my head quite ache when I look up at him."

"You must not scold him," said the Mother-Snail. "He crawls very deliberately. We shall have great pleasure in him, and we old people have nothing else to live for. But have you ever considered where we shall get a wife for him? Don't

you think that farther in the wood there may be some more of our kind ? " •

" There may be black snails there, I think," said the old man ; " black snails without houses, but they're too vulgar. • And they're conceited, for all that. However, we can give the commission to the Ants : they run to and fro, as if they were busy ; they're certain to know of a wife for our young gentleman."

" I surely know the most beautiful of brides," said one of the Ants ; " but I am afraid she would not do, for she is the Queen."

" That is of no consequence," said the two old Snails. " Has she a house ? " •

" She has a castle ! " replied the Ant—" the most splendid ant's castle, with seven hundred passages."

" Thank you," said the Mother-Snail ; " our boy shall not go into an ant-hill. If you know of nothing better, we'll give the commission to the white gnats ; they fly far around in rain and sunshine, and they know the burdock wood, inside and outside."

" We have a wife for him," said the Gnats. " A hundred man-steps from here a little snail with a house is sitting on a gooseberry bush ; she is quite alone, and old enough to marry. It's not more than a hundred man-steps from here."

" Yes, let her come to him," said the old people. " He has a whole burdock forest, and she has only a bush."

And so they brought the little maiden Snail. A

week passed before she arrived, but that was the rare circumstance about it, for by this one could see that she was the proper sort.

And then they had a wedding. Six glowworms lighted as well as they were able; with this exception it took place very quietly, for the old Snail could not bear feasting and dissipation. But a capital speech was made by the Mother-Snail. The father could not speak, he was so much affected. Then they gave the young couple the whole burdock forest for an inheritance, and said, as they always had said, namely—that it was the best place in the world, and that the young people, if they lived honourably, and increased and multiplied would some day be taken with their children to the ducal palace, and boiled black, and laid upon a silver dish. And when the speech was ended, the old people crawled into their houses and never came out again, for they slept.

The young Snail pair now ruled in the forest, and had a numerous progeny. But as the young ones were never boiled and put upon silver dishes, they decided that the ducal palace had fallen in, and that all the people in the world had died out, and as nobody said otherwise, they must have been right. And the rain fell down upon the burdock leaves to play the drum for them, and the sun shone to burnish the burdock forest for them; and they were happy, extremely happy—the whole family was happy, wonderfully happy!



LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

"MY poor flowers are quite dead," said little Ida.

"They were so beautiful yesterday evening, and now all their leaves are faded! Why do they do so?" asked she of the student on the sofa, and whom she liked vastly well. He could tell the prettiest stories, and he cut out such funny things! hearts with little dancing ladies in them, flowers, and large castles with doors that opened—he was in sooth, a merry student! "Why do the flowers look so piteous to-day?" repeated she, showing him a nosegay that was quite withered.

"Don't you know what's the matter with them?" said the student. "Why, the flowers went to a ball last night, and that's the reason they hang their heads."

"But flowers can't dance," objected little Ida.

"Yes, but they can!" said the student, "when it is dark, and we are all asleep, they then taper about right merrily: they have a ball almost every night."

"Cannot children go to these balls?"

"Yes," said the student, "baby daisies and mayflowers."

"Where do the pretty flowers dance?" asked little Ida.

"Have you not often seen the large palace outside the town, where the King spends the summer, and where there is such a beautiful garden full of flowers? You have seen the swans that swim towards you when you offer them bread-crumbs. Believe me, there are large balls out there."

"I was yesterday in the garden with mamma," said Ida, "but all the leaves were off the trees, and there were no flowers left. What has become of them? I saw so many in the summer."

"They are inside the palace," said the student. "Know that as soon as the King and his courtiers return to town, the flowers leave the garden and run into the palace and make merry. It is a sight to be seen! The two most beautiful roses sit upon the throne, and then they are King and Queen. All the red cock-combs place themselves on each

side, and make bows—those are the lords-in-waiting. Then all the prettiest flowers come in, and there is a large ball. The blue violets represent the little midshipmen—they dance with hyacinths and crocuses, which they call young ladies; the tulips and the large orange-lilies are old ladies, who watch to see whether the others dance well, and whether all is properly conducted."

"But," asked little Ida, "is there nobody there to hurt the flowers for daring to dance in the King's palace?"

"Nobody knows anything about it," said the student. "The old majordomo, who takes care of the palace, does, to be sure, come in sometimes in the night; but the flowers no sooner hear his keys rattling than they stand stock-still, and hide themselves behind the long curtains, with their heads peeping out. 'I smell flowers here,' says the old majordomo, but he can't see them."

"How delightful!" said little Ida, clapping her hands. "But, should I not be able to see the flowers?"

"Yes," said the student, "you need only remember next time you go there, to look in at the window, and you will perceive them. I did so to-day; and there lay a tall, yellow lily stretched on the sofa—and she was a court lady."

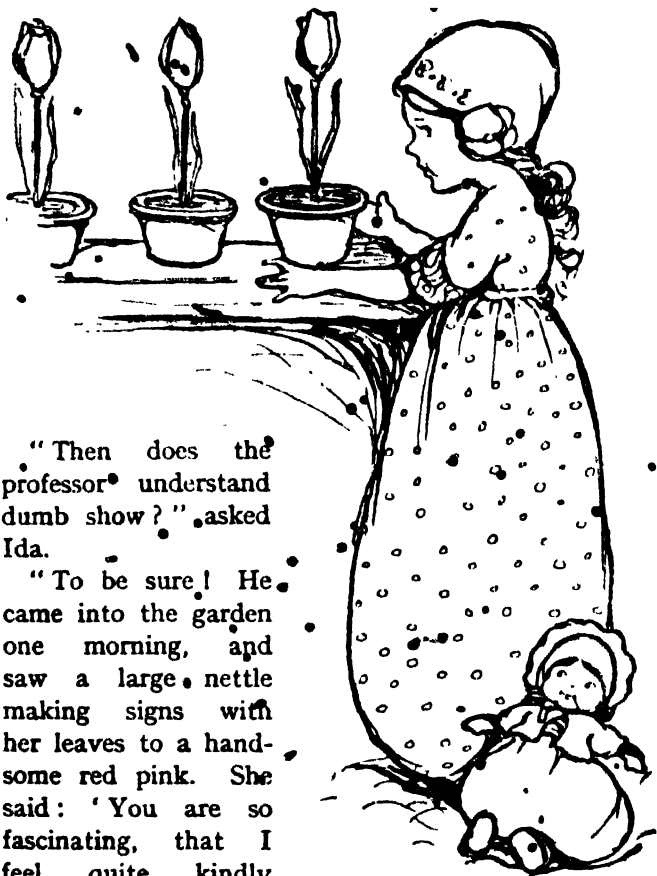
"Can the flowers in the botanical garden likewise join the ball? Can they go such a long way?"

"Certainly," said the student, "they can fly

when they please. Have you not seen beautiful red, white and yellow butterflies? They almost look like flowers, because they have been flowers. They fluttered away from their stems, high into the air, and flapped their leaves as though they were little wings, and then they could fly. And as they distinguished themselves, they obtained leave to fly about by day as well, and were not obliged to sit still on their stalk at home; and so the leaves finished by becoming regular wings. You have seen this yourself. It may, however, happen that the flowers in the botanical garden never went to the King's palace; or that they do not know what frolics take place there every night. Therefore, I'll tell you what—it would astonish the botanical professor who lives close by—you know him, don't you? If you were to go into his garden, and told one of the flowers that there was to be a great ball at the palace yonder, she in turn would tell all the others, and they would all fly away, and then when the professor comes out into the garden, and finds there is not a single flower left, he won't be able to imagine what has become of them all."

"But how can one flower tell the others? For flowers can't speak."

"No, they can't exactly speak," said the student, "but they can express themselves in dumb show. Have you not often remarked when it blows a little that flowers nod to each other, and move all their green leaves? That is just as intelligible to them as talking is to us."



"Then does the professor understand dumb show?" asked Ida.

"To be sure! He came into the garden one morning, and saw a large nettle making signs with her leaves to a handsome red pink. She said: 'You are so fascinating, that I feel quite kindly disposed towards you.' But the professor can't endure such things, so he rapped the nettle on her leaves, which are her fingers—only he burnt himself, and since then he does not venture to touch a nettle."

"That is very funny!" said Little Ida, laughing.

"How can one put such stuff into a child's head?" said a prosy chancery counsellor, who had come to pay a visit, and was sitting on the sofa. He could not bear the student, and always grumbled when he saw him cutting out ludicrous and amusing images—such as a man hanging from a gibbet and holding a heart in his hand, because he was a stealer of hearts—or an old witch riding on a broom, with her husband perched on her nose. The chancery counsellor could not endure such jokes, and would always observe as above: "How can one put such stuff into a child's head? What foolish fancies are these?"

But little Ida thought all the student had told her about her flowers extremely entertaining, and she pondered a great deal on the subject. The flowers hung their heads, for they were tired, as they had danced all night; they were ill to a certainty. She then took them to her other playthings, which stood on a neat little table, whose drawer was likewise full of pretty things. Her doll Sophy lay asleep in a doll's bed, but little Ida said to her, "You really must get up, Sophy, and make shift with sleeping in the drawer for to-night. The poor flowers are sick and they must lie in your bed, and perhaps they will get well again." And then she took out the doll, who looked vexed, though she did not say a word, for she did not relish being obliged to give up her bed.

Ida then laid the flowers in the doll's bed, and

drew the counterpane over them, and said they must now lie quite still, while she made tea for them that they might be refreshed and able to rise next morning. And she closed the curtains round the little bed, that the sun might not shine into their eyes.

That whole evening she could not help thinking of what the student had told her; and when she went to bed herself, she first peeped behind the window curtains where stood her mother's beautiful flowers, both tulips and narcissus, and whispered in a low voice: "I know you are going to a ball to-night." But the flowers pretended not to understand, and never moved a leaf—which did not prevent little Ida knowing what she knew.

After she had gone to bed, she lay awake a long while, thinking how pretty it must be to see flowers dancing in the King's palace yonder. "I wonder whether my flowers really went there?" thought she. And then she fell asleep. But she awoke in the night, having dreamed of the flowers and the student whom the chancery counsellor had scolded. All was quiet in the chamber where she lay; the night-light was burning on the table, and her parents were asleep. "I wonder whether my flowers are now lying in Sophy's bed?" thought she to herself. "How I should like to know!" She raised herself up a little, and looked towards the door that stood ajar; the flowers and all her playthings were in the adjoining room. She listened,

and then she thought she heard the keys of the piano touched so lightly and so sweetly as she had never heard before. "The flowers are certainly all dancing in the other room," thought she. "Oh, how I should like to see them!" But she did not dare to get up for fear of waking her parents.

"If they would but come in here!" thought she. But the flowers did not come, and the music went on playing so prettily, that she could no longer resist such delights, and she crept out of her little bed and stole softly to the door, and peeped into the room. Oh dear! What a pretty sight she saw, to be sure! There was no night-lamp in the room, still it was quite bright; the moon shone through the window down upon the floor, and it was almost like daylight. The hyacinths and narcissus stood in two long rows in the middle of the room; there were none left in the window, where stood the empty flower-pots. The flowers danced most gracefully about the floor, performing hands-round and other evolutions, and holding each other by their long green leaves as they twirled about. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, which little Ida distinctly remembered to have seen in summer, for she recollected the student saying: "La! how like Miss Lina she is!" Only everybody laughed at him at the time for saying so, though now little Ida really thought the tall, yellow lily was very like the lady; and her attitudes were exactly similar as she sat at the instrument, bending her long yellow

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

face first on one side, and then on another, and nodding time to the beautiful music !

No one observed little Ida. She then perceived a large, blue crocus hop on to the middle of the table where stood the playthings, and go right up to the doll's bed, and draw aside the curtains, when the sick flowers that lay there, immediately arose and made a sign with their heads to the others, that they wished to dance with them. The old pastil-burner, in the shape of a smoker whose underlip was broken, stood up, and bowed to the pretty flowers, who did not look sick at all, but jumped down to the others, and were vastly well pleased.

It now seemed as if something fell from the table. Ida looked that way, and saw it was a Saint Nicolas' rod that had jumped down, just as if she belonged to the flowers. She too was very elegant, and a little wax-doll, who wore just such a broad-brimmed hat as the Chancery counsellor, sat on the top of her. The rod hopped about, on her three wooden legs, all amongst the flowers, and made a great clatter, for she danced the mazurka, which the flowers could not do, because they were too light, and would not have been able to stamp so violently.

The wax-doll that was riding on the rod now suddenly grew, both in size and length, and, turning round upon the paper-flowers, exclaimed aloud : " How can one put such stuff into a child's head ? What foolish fancies are these ! " And the



wax-doll then looked exactly like the chan-cery counsellor with his broad-brimmed hat, and appeared every bit as yellow and as cross as he; but the paper-flowers struck his thin legs, and then he shri-velled up again, and became a little wax-doll once more. It was very funny to see, and little Ida could not help laughing. The rod continued dancing and the chan-cery counsellor was obliged to dance too—there was no help for it whether he

made himself taller and bigger, or whether he remained a little yellow wax-doll with a broad black hat. The other flowers then said a good word for him, particularly those who had lain in the doll's bed, and then the rod desisted. At the same moment there was a loud knocking inside the drawer, where Ida's doll Sophy was lying amongst so many other toys. The pastil-burner ran and laid himself down on the edge of the table, and began to pull out the drawer gently. Then Sophy got up, and looked around her in surprise. "There seems to be a ball here," said she. "Why did nobody tell me of it?"

"Will you dance with me?" said the pastil-burner.

"Dance with you indeed!" said she, turning her back upon him.

She then sat on the edge of the drawer, thinking that probably one of the flowers would come and ask her to dance; but none of them did. She then coughed: "Hem! ha-hem!" Still nobody came. The pastil-burner then, danced all alone, and not badly either.

As none of the flowers seemed to take any notice of Sophy, she slid down from the drawer, on to the floor, so as to make a great noise; and then the flowers all came crowding around her to ask whether she was not hurt, and they were very polite to her, especially those who had lain in her bed. But she was not at all hurt, and Ida's flowers

thanked her for the use of her pretty bed, and were very friendly, and took her into the middle of the room where the moon shone, and danced with her, while all the other flowers formed a circle around them. So now Sophy was pleased, and said they might keep her bed, for she did not mind lying in the drawer the least in the world.

But the flowers replied, "We thank you heartily, only we shall not live long enough to avail ourselves of your courtesy. To-morrow we shall be quite dead. But tell little Ida she must bury us in the garden, near the spot where her little canary-bird lies, and then in summer we shall wake up again, and be prettier than ever."

"No, you must not die," said Sophy, kissing the flowers; and then the door opened, and a whole bevy of beautiful flowers came in dancing. Ida could not imagine whence they came, and concluded they must be all the flowers from the King's summer palace. Two splendid roses led the way, and wore little gold crowns on their heads, for they were a King and a Queen. Then came the prettiest pinks and wall-flowers, who bowed to all present. They brought music with them. Large poppies and peonies blew through pea-shells till they were red in the face. Wild hyacinths and little white snowdrops jingled as if they had bells in them. It was a most remarkable orchestra! Then came many other flowers, who danced together: the blue violet and the red amaranth, the daisy and the may-

flower. And all the flowers kissed each other, and a lovely sight it was. At length the flowers bid each other good-night, and then little Ida crept back to bed, where she dreamed of all that she had seen.

As soon as she had risen, on the following morning, she ran to the little table to see if the flowers were still there. She drew back the curtains of the little bed, and there they lay, only still more faded than the day before. Sophy, too, was in the drawer, where she had been put away; but she looked very sleepy.

"Are you thinking of what you have to tell me?" said little Ida. But Sophy looked quite stupid, and did not say a word.

"You are naughty," said Ida. "Yet they all danced with you." And then she took a little paper-box, on which pretty birds were painted, and opened it, and laid the dead flowers inside. "That will serve as a smart coffin," said she, "until my cousins come to see me, when they shall help me to bury you in the garden, that you may grow up again by next summer, and be much more beautiful still."

Her cousins were two lively boys, named Jonas and Adolph, whose father had given them each a new bow, which they brought to show Ida. She told them of the poor flowers having died, and they were allowed to bury them. The two boys went before, with their bows on their shoulders, and

little Ida followed, with the dead flowers in the pretty box. A little grave was dug in the garden. Ida kissed the flowers, and then laid them, box and all, in the earth; and Adolph and Jonas shot their arrows over the grave, for they had neither guns nor cannons.



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